
CINEMA PROGRAMME

JULY 1 - OCTOBER 6 1982 - 60p.



GUYS AND DOLLS - LOLA - FITZCARRALDO

BLOOD WEDDING - THE INQUISITOR - LA RONDE

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Cover still: Jean Simmons and Marlon Brando in 'Guys and Dolls'.

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PROGRAMME NOTES

We regret that, due to pressures of time, we have been unable to provide notes on all the films showing in the cinema during the period covered by this programme. For films receiving late night and matinee screenings, please see the calendar at the centre of this booklet for a listing of titles and dates. Further details about these films can be found in the current Publicity Brochure.

CINEMA PRICES

£2.00 (public)
£1.50 (claimants, members, students)
85p (children under 14)
50p (OAPs)

MEMBERSHIP

The Arts Lab is a public cinema, but we also operate as a club when showing films which haven't been certified (usually for technical or financial reasons) by the British Board of Film Censors. Club performances are open only to members and their guests. Annual membership costs £7.50 and is open to all persons over the age of 18 years. Each member is allowed to bring in one guest.

Apart from access to club performances, the other advantages of membership include reduced admission charges for all performances and regular mailing of both the Cinema Programme and Publicity Brochure. The Arts Lab and the Centre for the Arts are now operating a joint membership system which means that subscribers will enjoy the benefits of membership of both organisations. There is a special membership fee of £5 for students and claimants.

CINEMA FOR THE UNEMPLOYED

Screenings of films at reduced prices for the unemployed continue on a regular basis every Tuesday at 2.30 p.m. The admission price is 50 pence, on production of dole cards. Please see the calendar at the centre of this programme for details of titles.

THE COFFEE BAR

The Arts Lab Coffee Bar is open at lunchtimes and early evening, offering anything from a light snack to a full meal. The Coffee Bar also caters for parties and special bookings—contact Debbie Raikes on 021-359 4192.

Library and bookshop news

Over July the library will be moving from its present precarious premises to what at the moment is the Lab office. This means, unfortunately, that the library will be closed during this period, from the 26th July till the 9th August. Having moved to larger premises the library will be incorporating our large stills and poster collection, and we are also planning a video component to the library's activities. Please note the library's new phone number, (021) 359 5545. Remember that we pay good prices for all those unwanted books and magazines you may have knocking around.

The bookshop is holding a sale from September 1 of a substantial collection of magazines and books; there will be even bigger discounts for Lab members. A new catalogue of all our current holdings is being prepared. Please get in touch with Neil Gammie if you would like a copy.

TV GLOBO SHORT SEASON

In conjunction with the British Film Institute, the Arts Lab will be screening a number of television programmes made by TV Globo, Brazil's most important TV network. Richard Paterson observes in his introduction to the BFI pamphlet that accompanies the season:

"The interest of TV Globo is much greater than that it is the leading Brazilian TV network. It is also the major exporter of television programmes and a central force in the development of Brazil's national culture. Indigenously produced television, including the *telenovela* (unique to Latin American television) and series drama (such as the widely-acclaimed feminist drama series, *Malu Mulher*) are transmitted at prime time. However, Brazil is one of the world's developing nations, despite having the tenth largest GDP in the world, and thus its television ought to fit theories of cultural imperialism and dependency. But it doesn't."

"... The key to Globo's strength as a production house is its use of the wealth of creative talent in Brazilian music, theatre, literature and cinema. In addition, its videographics have been widely acclaimed as innovative and among the best in the world. The opening allowed artistic expression within Brazil over the last few years have been exploited by Globo to the full. Previously exiled or banned writers and artists have been employed—João Cabral de Melo Neto's *Morte e Vida Severina* (screened at the end of 1981) is one example of a long-banned play being adapted for television in the post-1979 liberalisation. Globo has become an important agent of political communication—an *enfant terrible* acting within conflicting pressures from government, advertising and the needs for modernisation and critical debate."

The video screenings will take place in the Holt Street Gallery, next door to the Lab, at 7.00 p.m. on the dates listed below. Further documentation will be available in early August.

Wed. September 1
Sun. September 5

Wed. September 8
Sun. September 12
Wed. September 15

MORTE E VIDA SEVERINA (61 minutes).
MALU MULHER—The Good Old Days Are Gone (56 minutes) and MALU MULHER—Too Late, Too Soon (53 minutes).
ROMEO Y JULIETA (96 minutes).
GILBERTO GIL/JIMMY CLIFF (59 minutes).
OS TRAPALHOES (35 minutes) and O BEM AMADO-A Greve Piscatoria (45 minutes).



Rainer Werner Fassbinder (top), Romy Schneider (centre) and Warren Oates. All three artists died recently and this programme is dedicated to their memories. We have organised a short retrospective tribute to Warren Oates, whose work has never received the attention it deserves. The programme also includes three of Fassbinder's recent films (scheduled long before the director's tragic recent death), and Romy Schneider is featured in Claude Miller's 'The Inquisitor'.

ARTS LAB CINEMA STAFF

Director: Peter Walsh.
Programmer: Marion Doyen.
Assistant: David Hutchison.
Chief Projectionist: Gerry Gradwell.
Librarian: Neil Gammie.
Birmingham Film Workshop: Roger Shannon (Coordinator).
Visual Engineering by Teoman "Bodger" Irmak
Hair by 'Deborah'.



CUTTER'S WAY (Cuttter and Bone)

(July 1-6)

Director: Ivan Passer.
U.S.A., 1981.

Script: Jeffrey Alan Fiskin. Based on the novel
Cutter and Bone by Newton Thornburg.

Photography: Jordan Cronenweth.

Music: Jack Nitzsche.

Leading Players: Jeff Bridges (*Richard Bone*), John
Heard (*Alex Cutter*), Lisa Eichhorn (*Maureen
Cutter*), Stephen Elliott (*J.J. Cord*), Ann
Dusenberry (*Valerie Duran*), Arthur Rosenberg
(*George Swanson*).

Technicolor. Certificate X. 109 minutes.

Cutter and Bone: ambivalently evocative title of the first-rate thriller by Newton Thornburg on which Passer's film is based. It suggests either an unholy private eye alliance, perhaps in direct line of descent from the old firm of Spade and Archer. Or, once the story is under way, an operation in which a sinister surgeon practises a series of amputations in an attempt to save not so much his patient's life as his soul. When the film ran into a brick wall on its initial American release, the title was changed to the less resonant *Cutter's Way*; but the film itself, mercifully and despite rumours to the contrary, was left untouched.

It opens, with colour muted to mood more skilfully than in any film since Melville's *Le Samourai*, on a classic evocation of *film noir* as handsome, not-quite-so-young beach bum Richard Bone (Jeff Bridges), trimming his moustache in a motel room and gazing quizzically at the spent face in the mirror, apologetically tries to coax a handout from the woman he has just obliged with a one-night stand. Then out into the night, driving down a dark alleyway, rain obscuring the windshield so that he sees very little as another car passes and halts in a meaningless

manoeuvre that subsequently turns out to have left the murdered body of a teenage girl stuffed into a trashcan.

So much for the *noir* element, since the rest of the film takes place, effectively, in the broad daylight of sunny California. The old formless fear that stalked those Forties thrillers, lurking in the night that descended on unhappy people driven by their own paranoia to flee lawful or unlawful retribution after some, error in judgement, has not taken shape. It is there, out in the open, embodied in the person of J.J. Cord, the multi-millionaire oil tycoon impulsively fingered as the killer by Bone, who immediately retracts, realising that he has no real grounds for his identification. Rather the contrary; circumstance may well have conspired to make him imagine the dark silhouette he glimpsed at the scene of the crime to be J.J. Cord.

Enter, promptly, the devil's advocate. Listening to Bone rationalising about what he may or may not have seen, his friend Cutter (John Heard) has no such scruples. A veteran of Vietnam who shoulders his own share of responsibility for minor My Lais and who emerged horribly mutilated by the loss of an arm, a leg and an eye, knows all about guilt and letting sleeping dogs lie. Talking about the atrocity pictures in *Life*, he explains: 'I went to school at those pictures. And you know what I found out? I found out you have three reactions, Rich, only three. The first one is simple—I hate America. But then you study them some more, and you move up a notch. *There is no God*. But you know what you say finally, Rich, after you've studied them all you can? You say—I'm hungry.'

Hunger is supposed to disarm hatred and anger, but not in the case of the embittered, paranoid Cutter, who retains one vengeful thought in mind: 'It's not *their* ass on the line, ever, it's always yours or ours'. So he hounds *them*, the fat cat powers who never have to pay for anything, by hounding Bone into hounding Cord as the killer who left the girl in the trashcan. Cord *may* not be guilty of the murder—indeed the film remains ambivalent on the point—right up to and beyond the final shot—but he *is* guilty. Of what, precisely, is the

subject of the film as traced through the extraordinarily complex relationship between Cutter, Bone, and Mo (Lisa Eichhorn), the girl who loves Cutter and is loved by Bone.

This is, in a sense, simply the age-old triangle, complicated by the fact that the trio are not so much characters as people, incorporating all the perversity which that implies, constantly shifting, unpredictable, forfeiting then regaining our sympathy until it is difficult to be sure where one stands, watching their three-cornered tragedy working itself out to an inexorable end. An end—the last time we in fact see Mo alive—marked by one of the most desolate moments in all cinema as she turns to Bone for the sanctuary denied her by Cutter. Secure as a child in Bone's solemn promise not to leave her, she snuggles into sleep. He leaves. And only a tiny movement of her hand, eloquent in despair, acknowledges the betrayal.

In Thornburg's novel, the connections are spelled out. The fact that Bone was once a bright industry executive but fled to life as a beach bum in hope of finding some honesty. That Mo is a disillusioned dropout from the alternative option of flower-power. That Cutter is the scion of an old-established Santa Barbara family, disinherited by property developers who have made an all mod. con. wilderness of one of the most beautiful corners of America. In the film the characters come without biographies, in a sense, although all of the above can be picked up by the attentive between the lines. As for J.J. Cord, he looms over the film like the oil rigs glimpsed on the horizon, polluting the landscape as Bone sails his boat close to the wind.

With Cutter single-mindedly driving his reluctant crew in pursuit of his mortal enemy and immortal evil, one hardly needs the references to Captain Ahab and Moby Dick to grasp that this is what the film is all about: three minnows struggling desperately to avoid being engulfed as the leviathans of speculation turn what might be paradise into their own personal happy hunting-ground.

Tom Milne

'LATIN HERO'

In the 1970s ethnic, working-class America became visible in the cinema in a way it had never been before. Just as immigrants of all nationalities have always been integral to American society, so the 'ethnic' (Italian, Jewish, Slav, Greek, Puerto Rican, etc.), as opposed to the 'native' (but not Red Indian), American has had a place in its cinema. But the place of the *specifically ethnic* character has, until quite recently, been a marginal one. Where it has occupied a central role, this has mostly been tied to the necessities of generic convention (thrillers such as *Little Caesar*, boxing films such as *Somebody Up There Loves Me*, dramas such as *A Streetcar Named Desire* and so on, in which ethnicity provides local colour and a certain degree of motivation for character, but little more); or it has been tied to the demands of plot (for instance, a thriller about the American Mafia must entail Italo-American characters). Otherwise ethnicity has been confined on the whole to the narrow range of 'character' parts: minor hoodlums, mamas, sisters, storekeepers and the like. (There have, of course, been exceptions to this, of which *West Side Story* is one—but even here, Puerto Rican life is hardly examined in any depth.)

In the early Seventies all this changed. *The Godfather*, directed by Francis Ford Coppola, was released in 1971 and was enormously successful. The film is about the Mafia—although, as Neil Sinyard observes in his notes on the film, that name is never used. More particularly, it is about one Mafioso family, the Corleones. *The Godfather* brought Al Pacino into the big time. It can now be seen as having paved the way for the many subsequent films which were to centre on specifically ethnic (and usually male Italian) protagonists. A number of these are to be shown in this short season.

What had happened? Why the sudden interest, on the part of film-makers and public alike, in subjects that had hitherto been either marginalised or wholly ignored? What conclusions may be drawn from the impact and success that most of these films had? A really adequate answer to these questions would entail the writing of a full social and cultural history of the United States of America in the '60s and early '70s. While this cannot be attempted here, certain issues which are closely related to social and cultural changes in the U.S. may be briefly examined. These are to do with the representation of class, of sexuality and of the family. It is also worth noting that the stars of all these films (with the exception of *Gloria*) are male.

Class

All the films in this season (and others of the same genre, such as *F.I.S.T.*, *Blue Collar*, *Taxi Driver* and *The Deer Hunter*, which are not showing) have a common feature: they deal with the immigrant working class. It's a basically European working class, too—Italian, Polish, Slovak, Greek; blacks and Chicanos are very rarely in evidence. But these films are not *about* working class life, although they are situated in that milieu. Their protagonists/heroes have aspirations towards the middle class, and it is the accomplishment (or not) of these aspirations that gives the films their narrative impulse. Keitel in *Fingers* has his piano, Travolta in *Saturday Night Fever* his dancing, Pacino in *Serpico* joins the police, and in *Dog Day Afternoon* he robs the Chase Manhattan Bank. *The Godfather* is about how a family brings that dream to fruition. These young men are all, in some way or another, fighting to get out of the working class—the 'gutter'. What is significant, however, is that with the exception of *Bloodbrothers*, the texture of working class life, its everyday reality, is almost invisible: it constitutes a backdrop to the main

action of the film. If one considers that a third of the life of the people who are represented in these films is spent in the workplace, this omission becomes all the more remarkable. Lynn Garafola has written an excellent article on the working class in Hollywood cinema* in which she observes: 'Because class is a matter of lifestyle rather than economics... class conflict in these films is muted. The workplace appears as an isolated environment where bosses play a negligible role save for an occasional foreman, and where there is no apparent connection between what happens on the shop floor and what happens on Wall Street.' It would, of course, be misleading to suggest that all the films to be shown in this season are as blandly non-political as this. *Saturday Night Fever*, for example, is highly critical of the depression and deprivation of an environment that breeds racism, sexism and violence, and its picture of the economic and cultural poverty from which the hero (Travolta) is struggling to escape is at once detailed and, on the whole, unromanticised. Nevertheless, the solution to the problems the film proposes is a strictly conventional, individualist one: that of Friendship and Love. Any notion of collective action is stifled at birth. It's a rerun of the old American Dream story, but now the hero is no White Anglo Saxon Protestant but of immigrant—usually *Italian—origin. The American working class has become, in the eyes of Hollywood at any rate, 'ethnic'; but its dreams and hopes remain the same.

Sexuality

It's no accident, I think, that the central protagonists of all the films in the group (excluding *Gloria*—and *Normal Rae*, not showing here—but including *Taxi Driver* and the other aforementioned films) are male. Where the protagonists do display any solidarity with the working class ethic, it is with a specifically *macho* ethic. This is most obvious in *Bloodbrothers*. Mulligan's film is an ambiguous one: it is very clearly an attempt at a critique of a society in which external repression is replicated and reproduced within the family, but its critique, embodied in Stony's (Richard Gere) desire to work with children instead of following his father and his cronies on to the building-site, is undercut by two things: the way in which the film treats its female characters (which I'll return to), and the way in which it treats Tony's father (Tony Lo Bianco) and his workmates.

The sequence in which we see Stony and his father going to work is a very powerful (and extraordinarily sexy) one: to a soundtrack of exciting 'urban' music, lean-bodied men in tight jeans swagger into the building on which they are working, nonchalantly scaling horrendous heights while exchanging friendly badinage. It seductively shows the binding and vital nature of male camaraderie, of pride in one's work, of joy in danger. The film here endorses strongly those things which elsewhere it seeks to question. That endorsement is clearly linked to the notion of 'Latinity'—that is to say, to a particular form of extrovert sexuality which is part of the stereotype or myth of the Italian working class man. It is a potent myth, and while certain of the films do make attempts at least to question it, if not to dissolve it (one thinks of the gay protagonist in *Dog Day Afternoon*, of Richard Gere's relationship with the 'town pump' in *Bloodbrothers* and Travolta's with his dancing partner in *Saturday Night Fever*), these attempts tend to founder upon the rocks of such contradictions as are mentioned above—and also upon the personas of their stars. Pacino, De Niro, Stallone, Travolta, Keitel and Gere may have large eyes, long lashes and sensitive souls, but they are sold (Keitel included) as 'Latin Men'.

The Women's Movement has touched Hollywood to the extent that it is now permissible for men to be emotional, to cry, to feel (though it should be noted that these have, anyway, always been considered 'Latin' attributes); but there remains no doubt as to the sexual potency—linked with aggression—on which their 'masculinity' rests. It might indeed be argued that Hollywood has achieved a successful understanding and acceptance of certain key demands of the Women's Movement in this respect; but, ironically, this emotional openness has been projected on to aspects of the representation of men rather than of women, who reach a nadir of invisibility in most of these films. *Gloria*, again, is the exception here—one of the main reasons for showing this remarkable film.

Family

Whether present or implied, real or surrogate, the family is absolutely central to all these films. As I have observed in the notes in our brochure, it is significant that these films were made in the years that saw the height of the violence in Vietnam, the liberating effects (in terms of family oppression) of the Women's Movement, and the deep distrust of the state and its machinery engendered by the Watergate affair. Divorce was mounting in the U.S., marriage as an institution was on the wane; the family represented (and still does) a bulwark against the tide of rapidly crumbling social institutions. The family is the matrix, the web, which gives stability and comfort, where it does not oppress and suffocate. It need not be 'blood' family (although that helps), for where real relations are missing the gap is filled by the extended family of, on the criminal side, the Mafia (see *The Godfather*, *Prince of the City*, *Gloria*) and on the other, legal, side the Police (see *Prince of the City*, which is precisely about the conflict between legal and illegal family demands and their betrayal, and *Serpico*, where the police force is very clearly part of the extended family of the policeman hero, and its 'betrayal' of him all the more bitter as a result). This dependence on the family implies a strong critique of a society in which nothing else is to be trusted, but the critique is all too often based on a nostalgia for past values, with no questioning of the family as a potentially deeply oppressive social institution.

As I have observed above, Mulligan's *Bloodbrothers* does seek to question the way in which repression within the family replicates that outside it: its failure to convince, however, is directly due to the stereotyped view of women which it repeats and reinforces. Women are to blame, in this film, for everything from smothering a now childless man's baby son to inducing anorexia nervosa in his brother's youngest son; the local good-time girl also happens to have a heart of gold (an age-old stereotype). It is not enough to bring into doubt those social and cultural structures which create tension and alienation in the family without also questioning the assumptions upon which the representations of men and women are based a great deal more closely than Schrader does here.

If this introduction to the season appears to be nothing more than a hatchet-job on the films to be shown, this is because certain aspects of the films do seem to me to demand that sort of critique. But it should be said, in conclusion, that one should perhaps be grateful for any sort of representation of a huge sector of the American population which has, until the Seventies, been chronically underrated and marginalised. That such films can have had the success they did is not wholly due to their reliance on old-fashioned and basically reactionary values: films such as *Saturday Night Fever*, *Mean Streets*, *Lord of Flatbush*, *Paradise Alley* and *Gloria* are more complicated than that. It is in their



contradictoriness and their complexity that their fascination lies.

Marion Doyen

*Lynn Garafola—"Hollywood and the Myth of the Working Class". From *Radical America*, Vol. 14, no. 1. (January-February, 1980).

MEAN STREETS

(July 4)

Director: Martin Scorsese.

U.S.A., 1973.

Script: Martin Scorsese, Mardik Martin. From a story by Martin Scorsese.

Photography: Kent Wakeford.

Music: The Rolling Stones, The Chantells, The Marvelettes, Eric Clapton, The Shirelles, Jimmy Roselli and others.

Leading Players: Harvey Keitel (*Charlie*), Robert De Niro (*Johnny Boy*), David Proval (*Tony*), Amy Robinson (*Teresa*).

Technicolor. Certificate X. 110 minutes.

Lenny Rubinstein writes about *Mean Streets* in *Cinéaste* (Vol. VI, no. 2):

Immigrants get exploited, and if the native bourgeoisie doesn't do complete enough a job, then the immigrants do it to each other, although with an accent and style brought over from their homelands. *Mean Streets* is about second and third generation Italian-Americans who serve as a reserve army of hustlers and petty criminals within the streets and bars of Manhattan's 'Little Italy'. The action is firmly set on those streets between Houston and Canal where there are posters of Neapolitan singers in the shops that sell imported foods and espresso coffee makers. Martin Scorsese has also highlighted the deep and complex emotional ties which bind the ranks of those aspiring Mafiosi

[Scorsese's] characters are portrayed as a mixture of criminal and fool. Their incredibly inflated sense of honour is contrasted with their shock and surprise at any attempt to enforce it with fists or guns. (They) affect the style of successful gangsters without any of the required skill or resources. Sometimes they behave like the Dead End kids and other times like serious candidates for important posts in organized crime. By its focus on characters who are the shadow of the Mafia without any of its real power, professionalism or wealth, *Mean Streets* is interesting but hardly believable

The film does not moralize its characters' plight; they know the cops are crooked and they know the price for failure to pay a debt. They accept the blood code that demands vengeance, yet hide under the table when the bloodied victim grapples with his assailant, 'just like Rasputin', as one of the characters comments. Charlie (Harvey Keitel) lusts after the nightclub's black dancer yet fears the repercussions this might have on his promotion. All their heroic or tough postures are self-conscious membranes to protect them from the reality of failure, of destruction resulting from the blood code by which they attempt to live.

The film's value lies in this posture, since the

characters are neither really important nor powerful; they play the numbers and cards and hang around the streets of their boyhood neighbourhood in loud clothes and fancy cars. Many of them still live with their parents and one sequence with Charlie and Theresa has them battling over her desire to leave the neighbourhood. Scorsese's characters come from a world of lower middle-class people that most films have ignored, a world where a certain amount of petty theft and larceny is expected and even a source of pride. In *Mean Streets* that world is a corrupt extended family, a family that will protect its own but, like all families, it exacts an amazingly high price.

FINGERS

(July 11)

Director: James Toback.

U.S.A., 1977.

Script: James Toback.

Photography: Mike Chapman.

Music: J.S. Bach, F. Chopin, Charlie and Inez Foxx, The Drifters, and others.

Leading Players: Harvey Keitel (*Jimmy "Fingers" Angelelli*), Tisa Farrow (*Carol*), Jim Brown (*Dreems*), Michael V. Gazzo (*Ben Angelelli*), Martian Seldes (*Ruth Angelelli*).

Technicolor. Certificate X. 90 minutes.

We last showed James Toback's film *Fingers* almost exactly one year ago. We are screening it again in this season on 'Latin Heroes' for two reasons, the first being that it is almost *par*

excellence the representation of the neurotic side of the 'Latin' stereotype and the second being Harvey Keitel's extraordinary performance in the central role: all twitching *machismo* and misdirected sexual energy. Philip Strick wrote of the film:

'On the face of it, you wouldn't find too many people with a kind word to say for Jimmy "Fingers" Angelelli, a pushy, foul-mouthed little squirt clawing his way through the shadier sides of New York. He works as a hit-man for his father (a rather larger, noisier, balder squirt), reclaiming cash plus interest on loans made to rip-off merchants of varying degrees of eminence in the city's underworld. Jimmy has aspirations, though: he's going to be a concert pianist (like his mother, now snarling at him from an asylum) just as soon as he has passed his audition at Carnegie Hall. When he's not hustling on the streets he's at his grand piano getting stoned on Bach and Chopin—not a bad performer, either, when he's alone. With an audience, he might as well be using his feet

'Jimmy's other passion is Carol, picked up on the streets like most girls: unlike the rest, she gets under his skin in some way But it turns out she's already spoken for She's a compliant mistress, one of many, for black nightclub owner Dreems, around seven feet square and great at murmuring seductive platitudes. Dreems (quite a challenge, that name) is brutal, ruthless and insatiable, and Jimmy has neither the words nor the charisma to win Carol away from him.

'The remaining influence on Jimmy's life, too much so, is Riccamonza, a Mafia mobster with no patience for such trivia as gambling debts. When Jimmy, urged by his father, plays rough and talks his way into Riccamonza's girl in record seduction time, the heavies start to gather. It all turns into one of the nastiest encounters from which you'd ever wish to avert your gaze—gouging, ripping, blood everywhere as the shots are fired. And it does nothing whatever for Jimmy's chances as a concert-hall pianist

Fingers is a profoundly disturbing film. In many ways similar to Scorsese's *Taxi Driver* (as Philip Strick notes), it shares with it an ambivalent attitude both to violence in general—it at once provides a critique and an implicit endorsement of violence as the solution to society's problems—and, more specifically, to a sort of sexual violence that is deeply disturbing in its implications. We are invited to disapprove of the protagonist's attitude to women, but at the same time we are also invited to understand and empathise with the neurosis in which his sexism is rooted. Through gesture, action and words, Keitel and De Niro are explained and explain themselves; that privilege is never granted to the female characters—not even the 'Latin' ones. It seems that the advantages of 'Latinity': sensitivity, outspoken emotionality, the qualities of the extrovert, hitherto very much the attributes of 'femininity' (especially the former two) are now to be extended to the male and withdrawn from the female, who has become the more or less passive recipient of these characters.

M.L.D.



Harvey Keitel (right) in 'Fingers'



GLORIA

(July 18)

Director: John Cassavetes.
U.S.A., 1980.
Script: John Cassavetes.
Photography: Fred Schuler.
Music: Bill Conti.
Leading Players: Gena Rowlands (*Gloria Swenson*), John Adams (*Phil Dawn*), Buck Henry (*Jack Dawn*).
Colour. Certificate AA. 121 minutes.

John Cassavetes' fine film uses and undermines the conventions of the gangster thriller in ways which make it interesting in the context of this season. Its central character is not a man but a gun-totin' gangster's moll who becomes the reluctant guardian of a six-year-old Puerto Rican boy when his family is wiped out by the Mob. The couple's flight through New York (excellent use of locations) and developing relationship is what the film is all about, with the fraught Puerto Rican family only being featured in an electrifying opening sequences. "You're the man, you're the man," the father tells the precocious Phil as he sends him off with Gloria, and much of the humour in the film derives from the kid's attempts to measure up to this role. Attempting a hopeful seduction when he finds himself sharing the same bed as Gloria, he is rebuffed with the recommendation to "Forget it; I outweigh you by sixty pounds." As Richard Combs observed in an article on the film in *Sight and Sound* (Spring 1981), "So forward is little Phil, clenching his fists and insisting 'I am the man,' then contritely apologising later for the trouble he has caused, that it's impossible not to see him as every macho hero on the lam, shrunk to pint size. Gloria then becomes the archetypal woman in tow, swollen to reluctant motherhood, wiping his bloody nose and telling, 'You are not the man. You don't listen. You don't know anything'."

BLOODBROTHERS

(July 25)

Director: Robert Mulligan.
U.S.A., 1978.
Script: Walter Newman. Based on the novel by Richard Price.
Photography: Robert Surtees.
Music: Elmer Bernstein.
Leading Players: Paul Sorvino (*Louis De Coco—'Chubby'*), Tony Lo Bianco (*Tommy De Coco*), Richard Gere (*Stony*), Lelia Goldoni (*Maria De Coco*), Marilu Henner (*Annette*).
Technicolor. Certificate X. 116 minutes.

Bloodbrothers occupies a similar milieu to that of Scorsese's *Raging Bull*, except that, even more overtly than in the Scorsese film, Italian-American family life is presented as a sort of boxing arena in which the punchbags are often women and children. Whereas *Raging Bull* was somewhat ambiguous in its attitude to the macho values of its hero, *Bloodbrothers* seems unequivocally critical of the community's chauvinism and its raucous round of drinking bouts and womanising.

The tension of the film is presented through the dilemma of the central character Stony (Richard Gere) who wants to choose what to do with his life but who is being pressurised by his father to follow him in working on a construction site. The film concerns Stony's attempt to reconcile loyalty to his family and his duty to himself. The scenes of family life are presented with an intensity that makes love a form of oppression and blood relationship a tool of emotional blackmail. Family feeling becomes inseparable from

insidious egotism. The father views his wife's supposed infidelity from the perspective of how it will affect his standing in the community, just as she views her younger son's illness as an unjust reflection on her running of the home. The family becomes a prison in which nobody can make an independent move without affecting the status of the others.

The most striking scene in the film is the quietest, when the uncle (Paul Sorvino) tells the barman that his affection for Stony probably stems from the fact that his own child accidentally suffocated. Some critics took this scene merely as a welcome respite from the filial floggings that are taking place elsewhere. But, as well as being one of those innumerable privileged moments that are scattered throughout Mulligan's work (like the high school dance in *Up the Down Staircase*, or the breakdown of the heroine in *Inside Daisy Clover*), the scene is crucial, for 'accidental suffocation' is really the film's central image of the family and the stranglehold of family authority which drives the children into corners and into dead ends. It is visually a very enclosed film, which in turn defines the narrowness of the community and its values. But a wealth of background detail—the recurrent motif of the passing train, the sound of children at play as Stony tries to unlock the torment inside his head—suggests an alternative world outside to the authoritarian future being proffered to the hero by his father.

The film ends precariously balanced between a sense of attainment and a sense of loss. The break has been made and yet the two brothers are heading into an uncertain future, a dark city which uncomfortably recalls the film's opening shot. Many of this director's films (*Fear Strikes Out*, *To kill a Mockingbird*, *Inside Daisy Clover*, *The Stalking Moon*, *Summer of '42*) chart the movement of children or adolescents into the



THE LORDS OF FLATBUSH

(July 25)

U.S.A., 1974.
Directors: Stephen F. Verona, Martin Davidson.
Script: Stephen F. Verona, Gayle Glecker, Martin Davidson.
Photography: Joseph Mangine, Edward Lachman.
Music: Joe Brooks.
Leading Players: Perry King (*Chico Tyrell*), Sylvester Stallone (*Stanley Rosiello*), Henry Winkler (*Butchey Weinstein*), Paul Mace (*Wimpy Murgalo*), Susan Blakely (*Jane Bradshaw*), Maria Smith (*Frannie Malincanico*).
Technicolor. Certificate AA. 84 minutes.

Steeped in '50s nostalgia this off-the-wall labour of love mixes Cassavetes-style claustrophobia with a Brooklynese sense of humour to illustrate

its everyday tale of four juvenile delinquents who quit school to face life in the 'real' world. Relationships become conquests or major embarrassments, and the macho world of leather jackets, shiny black motorcycles and studied posing slips noisily from their hands.

A Doo-Wop score (including contributions from Paul Jebara) and a soon-to-become million dollar cast (just before Stallone came up with *Rocky*, and Winkler starred in *Happy Days*) have a ball mixing and matching acting styles (Chuck Berry, Haley, Jerry Lewis and the Platters all affectionately plagiarised). Made on their own time and money and blown up to 35mm, Verona and Davidson have succeeded where high-budget attempts like *The Wanderers* have failed in conveying a sense of the time, place and frustrations—and the humour—of an era when growing up was so very hard to do.

Steve Woolley



adult world and it is a movement which is fraught with strangeness, alarm and foreboding. *Bloodbrothers* has the sympathy, skill and fine acting that characterises most of Mulligan's work. I can only attribute the uniformly hostile reception of the film by the British press to the inability of British reserve to cope with Latinate emotion and the refusal to recognise that the film is actually attacking precisely those attitudes it was criticised for endorsing.

Neil Sinyard

THE GODFATHER

(August 14)

Director: Francis Ford Coppola.

U.S.A., 1971.

Script: Mario Puzo, Francis Ford Coppola. Based on the novel by Mario Puzo.

Photography: Gordon Willis.

Music: Nino Rota.

Leading Players: Marlon Brando (*Don Vito Corleone*), Al Pacino (*Michael Corleone*), James Caan (*Sonny Corleone*), Robert Duvall (*Tom Hagen*), Diane Keaton (*Kay Adams*), Talia Shire (*Connie Rizzi*), John Cazale (*Fredo Corleone*).

Technicolor. Certificate X. 175 minute.

Perhaps the best way to provide notes on *The Godfather* is simply to do a glossary of terms:

Mafia: a word that is pointedly never used in the film, mainly because of the pressure the Mafia brought on Paramount not to use it. In a way this adds to the film's effectiveness: every action and instinct of the characters is controlled by something which they accept as natural and neither question nor name. An English translation of 'Mafia' in that context would be 'ideology'.

Family: *The Godfather* is a family melodrama more than a gangster film. It is about family planning. The Corleones are less like Capone than like the Borgias.

The action of the film is planned around family rituals: meals, weddings, baptisms, funerals. Indeed Corleone (Marlon Brando) hardly strays outside his own home, and part of the force of the film comes from this sense of influence without movement, the sense of a society being controlled by a man in a dark room of his own house. The transformation of Michael (Al Pacino) from returning American war-hero to cold-blooded killer is triggered by the code of honour which impels him to murder out of family loyalty. 'I'm with you now, I'm with you', he says to his wounded father in the hospital and, from then on, there is a slow and shocking transformation in which the character's face is, both literally and metaphorically, reconstructed.

Godfather: the twin implications of this word are particularly contained in the baptism scene at the end when Michael is acting as godfather to his sister's child. At the same time that he is explicitly renouncing Satan and his works, a series of vicious murders organised by him are being committed to confirm his position as 'godfather' in the other sense. It is often said that, for Italians in America, the choice is between the priesthood or a life of crime to escape from economic poverty. The Corleones' criminality seems to draw Catholicism without a sense of sin. *Godfather* also underlines a community of patriarchal control, a life in which women are subordinate, shut out from decisions (as in the film's final closing door).

Business: 'Tell Michael it was only business' (i.e. I am a traitor); 'Today I settled all family business' (i.e. I organised a series of murders); 'It's not personal, Sonny, it's strictly business' (i.e. I agree to become an assassin out of purer motives than mere revenge).

'Business' is a synonym for everything that is malevolent and violent in the film. It is also the film's way of suggesting that the Corleones see their influence as no more nor less than a triumph of private enterprise. The Corleones are not only the Mafia: they are corporate America. 'My father's no different from any other powerful man', says Michael to Kay (Diane Keaton), who

retorts: 'Other powerful men don't have people killed'. 'Now who's being naive', replies Michael.

Part of the force of *The Godfather* comes from thrusting you into a familiar genre and making it appear a foreign country. Language is awry, words portending something quite different from their ostensible meaning ('He made him an offer he couldn't refuse'): might this refer to the notorious euphemisms that marked government statements about Vietnam? The pacing is foreign, a gangster film with the languorousness of a Visconti. The milieu is foreign, a gangster film with hardly any sense of the city and indeed little physical sense of the outside world, except when the action shifts to Italy.

Most of all, the heroes are different. There is no identification figure, no sense whatever of the law, or of the American good guy, or of the normal world. A native American film-maker might have reflected the material differently, as Martin Ritt had done none too successfully a few years earlier in his Mafia film, *The Brotherhood*. Said producer Robert Evans, justifying the casting of Coppola for *The Godfather*: 'He knew the way these men ate their food, kissed each other, talked. He knew the grit'. The film's style and success were enormously influential, as directors like Coppola, Scorsese, De Palma, and actors like Pacino and De Niro presented strikingly new and audacious forms of Italian/American endeavour—like, for example, conquering Hollywood.

Neil Sinyard

SERPICO

(August 15)

Director: Sidney Lumet.

U.S.A., 1973.

Script: Waldo Salt, Norman Wexler. Based on the novel by Peter Maas.

Photography: Arthur J. Ornitz.

Music: Mikis Theodorakis.

Leading Players: Al Pacino (*Frank Serpico*), John Randolph (*Sidney Green*), Jack Kehoe (*Tom Keough*), Barbara Eda-Young (*Laurie*).

Technicolor. Certificate X. 130 minutes.

Serpico and *Prince of the City*, both films which deal with police corruption and the attempt by one policeman to 'clean up' his force, are at fascinating variance with one another in the way in which they treat their subjects. *Prince of the City*, with its bleak, grainy photography, its huge cast, and its obsessive attention to detail in the depiction of one man overwhelmed by forces far greater than he, almost attains the status of epic tragedy; *Serpico*, equally interesting, is a very much more conventional affair, lushly photographed and rooted in the tried and tested generic conventions both of the thriller and, in certain ways, of the Western. Frank Serpico, the cop-hero, is just one of a very long line of lone-heroes-fighting-corrupt-system, as Dan

Geakas has pointed out in an article in *Cinéaste*, from which the following passages are reproduced:

'Hollywood has been searching for a new hero-image and in *Serpico* the money boys have come up with a box-office miracle—the Law 'n' Order Hippie. Frank Serpico is the typical celluloid honcho in that he is a man isolated not only from political movements but from any social context. In the film's first scenes we view him briefly as Serpico-the-Italo-American, laughing with his family and exchanging jokes with his boyhood acquaintances. The only purpose of this section seems to be to establish the film's liberalism by showing that all Italians do not belong to the Mafia or become corrupt cops. No connections are made between Serpico's formative years spent in a white ethnic neighbourhood and the moral values and fierce integrity which mark his adulthood. We never learn why he wanted to become a cop in the first place. We never know what he means to accomplish as a cop, what it means to *him* to be an honest cop. Serpico is a-historic, an individual without real friends, family or social classes

'Serpico's . . . problem is that he discovers his beloved police department is totally corrupt. He is so honest that he not only refuses to be part of the corruption but he has an overriding need to expose it

'Given Serpico's background of growing up in a New York Italian neighbourhood, it is inconceivable that before joining the force he would not have had some idea of the connections between organized crime and the police. His dismay, as shown in the film, is more suitable to the reaction of an individual raised in a town of two hundred situated on the edge of the Painted Desert. Serpico, after all, is depicted as coming from a family of cops and he has lived all his life in the big city. His outrage is outrage in a vacuum and his crusader's zeal is motiveless.

'[. . .] The overall impact of the film is to perpetuate the notion that a decent individual has absolutely no chance to reform the system (forget about revolution). Such a figure is shown as essentially crazy, a person without roots, neurotic, doomed. Rather than anger at police corruption, the viewer feels badly that Serpico the genius figure is so poorly treated. The corruption of the police is not translated into the corruption of life in the streets and the millions who must thereby suffer. The film avoids any connections between police corruption and political corruption

'Unfortunately, Pacino's Serpico recalls the old flicks in which the cowboy hero rode into town from nowhere and eventually rode out to nowhere, possessed with an unknowable wisdom and hurt. Many of these cowboys were as disgusted with the townsfolk as they were with the crooks. More than once they, too, threw their tin stars into the dust. Serpico is that hero updated, the individual loner pursuing his independent quest for some purity which is mysterious and appealing primarily because it is totally undefined and unreal. The cowboy had his horse to love; Serpico has his dog'.

(From *Cinéaste*, Vol. VI, no. 2)



SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER

(August 18, 20-21)

Director: John Badham.

U.S.A., 1977.

Script: Norman Wexler. Based on a story by Nik Cohn.

Photography: Ralf D. Bode.

Music: Barry Gibb, Robin Gibb, Maurice Gibb; performed by the Bee Gees.

Leading Players: John Travolta (*Tony Manero*), Karen Lynn Gorney (*Stephanie*), Barry Miller (*Bobby C.*), Joseph Cali (*Joey*), Paul Pape (*Double J.*)

Colour. Certificate X. 119 minutes.

"Travolta's sex appeal . . . is of a different sort from that traditionally allowed male stars. Although *Saturday Night Fever* seems to fall smoothly into the currently popular genre of urban realism (*Serpico*, *Dog Day Afternoon*, et al.), it ultimately bears more resemblance to the classic studio musical, specifically of the backstage, star-is-born variety. At the centre of the spectacle is Tony Manero, working days in a hardware store and working out as a dancer at night, perfecting his moves and polishing his star image. His final ascension to Manhattan holds out the implicit promise of Broadway, a curiously romantic revival of one of the musical's most venerable clichés.

"The interior of the 2001 Disco is as stylized as the set of any MGM musical—an abstract assemblage of flashing lights, deep shadows, and odd distortions of space. During the dance numbers, John Badham's cinema seems as slavishly devoted to Tony as it might, thirty years ago, have been devoted to a Hayworth or a Charisse. This isn't the direct, head-on camera work preferred by Kelly and Astaire, but an overtly romantic, adulatory technique, made up of off-angles, delirious lighting, and frenzied montage—an effect that abstracts, even fetishizes, Travolta's performance. In no sense does Tony dance 'with' his partners; he hardly even dances at them. There is no sexual exchange, as in the best of Astaire and Rogers, but rather a curious feeling of self-containment, as if Travolta's sexual expression were complete in and of itself. His partners are merely members of an abbreviated chorus line, backing up and setting off the star.

"Tony's self-containment extends beyond the dance floor. He's the most passive romantic lead in film history, waiting for women to hit on him, and then not caring much when they do. The sole sexual contact in the film is an aborted oral sex scene in the back of a car: it's perfunctory and messy; Tony hardly seems involved. Only when he meets a woman (Karen Lynn Gorney) who is as self-contained as he is does Tony's interest seem to perk, and then his only response is to return to the mirror, to continue working on his image. The grand romantic climax comes in the form of a shy handshake, and a promise of nothing more than friendship."

(Extract from an article in *Film Comment*, Vol.15, no.1. January-February, 1979, by David Kehr.)

DOG DAY AFTERNOON

(August 18)

Director: Sidney Lumet.

U.S.A., 1975.

Script: Frank Pierson. Based on a magazine article by B.F. Kluge, Thomas Moore.

Photography: Victor J. Kemper.

Leading Players: Al Pacino (*Sonny Wortzik*), John Cazale (*Sal*), Sully Boyar (*Mulvaney*), Penelope Allen (*Sylvia*).

Technicolor. Certificate X. 130 minutes.

On a hot afternoon, August 22, 1972—the day on which Nixon and Agnew were nominated for office by the Republican Party of the U.S.A.—a hold-up took place at the Chase Manhattan Bank in Brooklyn, New York. One of the robbers, John Wojtowicz, announced that he was robbing the bank in order to finance a sex-change operation for his second wife, Ernie Aron, a transsexual.

The Press, radio and television had a field day



'Dog Day Afternoon'

with this event: crowds gathered around the bank, inside which the robbers were holding employees hostage, and cheered them on. Eric Holm, in *Jump Cut* (no. 10/11, Part 1), has described both the events that took place, and the more detailed background to the film that Sidney Lumet was later to make, based on the reportage of the hold-up. Extracts from his article are reproduced here:

"Arthur Bell, a gay *Village Voice* reporter/activist who had also been summoned to the bank by Wojtowicz, later tried to capture the tone of the scene outside, a raucous mélange of gay and straight bravado: "Obviously, the whole reverse macho trip was part of the street excitement. Homosexuals are supposed to be victims. And here's a tough guy John Dillinger victor. Instead of demanding his Lady in Red, Littlejohn (Wojtowicz) was asking for his transvestite in pajamas". (*Village Voice*, August 31, 1972.)

"But Ernie Aron was dissuaded from joining Wojtowicz's getaway attempt, which continued downhill into Lewisburg Penitentiary and superstardom by proxy for the handsome, would-be rescuer of Aron from an unwanted male body.

"A month after the original robbery, *Life* ran a rather tacky pictorial story ("The Boys in the Bank", September 1972) whose authors remarked that Wojtowicz resembled Al Pacino. Before the year was out, Wojtowicz got an ambiguous letter from Warner which, he still believes, offered him 1% of the net from a projected film, "Boys in the Bank"

"[...] In the process of transforming Wojtowicz's story into a bankable movie, much has been lost. Though appealing in his own way, the warm, mercurial, doggedly nice guy Al Pacino portrays in *Dog Day* is not as overtly gay nor as bristling with contradictions as his original, Wojtowicz, is reported to have been

"Left out of the film entirely is any mention of Wojtowicz's reported Mafia connections. [He] had decidedly fallen out of favour with the Gay Activists' Alliance in Summer 1971 over his association with Mike Umbers, the Mafioso manager of Christopher's End (a gay bar) and various callboy and porno operations. After a period when Christopher's End was closed by a police raid, Umbers had announced the reopening of his bar with an ad promising "Weird Sex Now". According to Bell, the GAA immediately organised a demonstration outside the bar against Mafia exploitation of gays. Wojtowicz attended the planning meeting but appeared at the demonstration carrying a sign supporting Umbers, meanwhile having passed along information about the organisers' plans to the mobster.

"After the bank robbery Bell investigated claims by Wojtowicz's friends that Umbers and soldiers of the Gambino family (New York-based Mafiosi owning many gay bars, including the renowned Stonewall) had set Wojtowicz and Sal up for the job at the Chase Manhattan branch bank . . . Bell's investigations brought bomb threats to the *Village Voice*, produced one scared witness who talked at length to the F.B.I. and occasioned a perfunctory police raid on Umbers's porn-publishing plant. Bell participated in several GAA business

meetings in which conservative and radical gays debated over whether Wojtowicz was a counterrevolutionary lumpen adventurer victimised by the mob or a proud gay superbly caught in an act of righteous expropriation, but the debate was inconclusive.

"The concerns that make these questions seem important are foreign to *Dog Day Afternoon*. Wojtowicz's contradictions, which mirror those of an urban gay scene incessantly leached over by cops and capitalists, both legal and illegal, are chopped out, as is his overt sexuality.... Lumet/Warner's snappy but squeamish development of Sonny's (Wojtowicz's) character undercuts the film's cautious explorations of human sexuality. In the end we are left with a fairly conventional story about a tragic-comic overreacher whose virtues and vices have disposed him to a destructive, passionate involvement with a transsexual and thence into a bungling attempt at a bank robbery that drags everyone around him into a dangerous and muddled confederaton from which only the killing of Sal can extricate them. Sonny's paternalistic, sex-role gamey sexuality is revealed in the end to be nothing more than a bizarre tragic flaw. The character Al Pacino plays might be a likeable monster of good intentions who has left his pudgy, frantic wife and kids for a svelte model in need of plastic surgery and the thrust of the movie would be much the same: people are funny"

PRINCE OF THE CITY

(August 22-24)

Director: Sidney Lumet.

U.S.A., 1981.

Script: Jay Presson Allen, Sidney Lumet. Based on the book by Robert Daley.

Photography: Andrzej Bartkowiak.

Music: Paul Chihara.

Leading Players: Treat Williams (*Daniel Ciello*), Jerry Orbach (*Gus Levy*), Richard Foronjy (*Joe Marinaro*), Don Billelt (*Bill Mayo*).

Technicolor. Certificate X. 167 minutes.

The following is an extract from a review of *Prince of the City* by Richard Linnett, which was originally published in *Cinéaste*, Vol. XI, No. 4, 1982.

"In October, 1961, two detectives from the Narcotics Division of the New York City Police Department began a celebrated investigation known within the Department as the Tuminaro Case. Named after a major Mafia family then importing heroin into the U.S. from France, the case required the additional services of a crack investigation squad whose members were culled from the very best ranks of the Narcotics Division. The division had operated primarily on street level drug traffic but, with the Tuminaro Case, it moved into the super-marketplace of international narcotics distribution. Its new élite squad became the first S.I.U.—Special

Investigations Unit—and it enjoyed the advantages of working with federal investigators, a citywide jurisdiction, and freedom of movement tacitly approved by the Police Department. The two detectives who initiated the Tuminaro Case, Sonny Grosso and Eddie Egan, cracked the Mafia family's 'French Connection' thanks largely to this latter advantage. Their unsupervised investigation techniques were freely unscrupulous and invariably illegal. They set the standard for subsequent generations of S.I.U. detectives who became known as 'Princes of the City', not only because they were in the habit of enforcing or dispensing with the law as they chose, but also because they dressed, dined and housed themselves more expensively than a policeman's regular wages could afford. Obviously these Princes plundered the very streets they policed. Their prosperous rule lasted from the day of the Tuminaros' fall to the hour of their own betrayal by a young and troubled second grade detective who turned against the fold in early 1971 to co-operate with the Commission to Investigate Alleged Police Corruption, a.k.a. the Knapp Commission.

"Leuci, the prize informant of the Commission, went undercover against fellow cops, Mafiosi, bail bondsmen, lawyers, and federal narcotics agents, for a period of a year and four months, and spent another bitter four and a half years testifying in more than thirty cases of corruption. He ruined the lives of many friends, precipitated a few deaths, and nearly destroyed his own life and career as a cop. In 1978 former New York City Deputy Police Commissioner Robert Daley published a taut journalistic account of Leuci's ordeal titled *Prince of the City* and, in 1981, we have the film version of that story directed by Sidney Lumet. The film is one of the most powerful and artistically distinguished American productions since *The Godfather, Part II*. Unlike the Francis Ford Coppola epic, *Prince of the City* is not a nostalgic and lavishly produced crime romance, nor is it, like Lumet's earlier *Serpico*, a simple corruption film with a saintly hero. *Prince of the City* is a masterpiece of mature film drama—a minimally mounted, two hour and forty-seven minute experience dense with gritty dialogue, complex characterisations, breathless pacing and controversy. It is primarily a film of ideas taking issue with the class character and the expediency of contemporary justice. It is the story of a sympathetic man who becomes a lowly rat, a pathetic informer within a Graham Greene-like world where good and evil have been inverted; where criminals make the law; and where there are no heroes, only grubby, pitiful victims.

"[...] Sidney Lumet's *Prince of the City* does not easily fit into the 'corruption film' genre. Besides its lack of a conventional hero, the film develops too strong a rapport with its corrupt elements. Lumet's film loses what little critical edge the Daley book had, something characteristic of the exposé stories published in the 1970s. Today the attitude is "the only thing standing between me and the jungle is a cop"—so



'Paradise Alley'

we look the other way, endorse Ronald Reagan's recent proposal to scrap search and seizure laws, and shed a few cautious tears for the S.I.U. But at least the film, unlike the book, points the finger at the privileged justice of the ruling class and its unequal distribution to the next in line.

"As for the storytelling, Lumet has created something almost impossible in this new cinema age of superfluous camerawork and inarticulate silence. He has directed a film that talks and argues like a grand courtroom drama. The Jay Presson Allen script, with its one hundred and twenty-six speaking roles and dialogue taken largely from the original Leuci tapes, employs little action, sustaining itself primarily through a steady, interior play of spoken encounters and betrayals. Ciello (i.e. Leuci) has the most memorable line of the script, a rhythmic, poetic utterance which captures in one breath the entire tone of the film: "Fuck him, fuck you and fuck them!" The film is spartanly photographed almost entirely within gray, confessional-like apartments and offices. Its most striking effects are drawn from the compelling performances of a largely unknown cast. Ciello's partners are a fluid ensemble of ethnic bravado, brotherly love, racist glibness, and shame. Jerry Ohrbach as Gus Levy stands out as a tough, squinty-eyed cop, and Lindsay Crouse as Ciello's wife powerfully portrays the despair of a woman helplessly threatened by mischief only men are capable of making. Treat Williams' Ciello is a manchild under five, a cocky baby-face that quickly wrinkles before our eyes. It is a superb performance."

PARADISE ALLEY

(October 3)

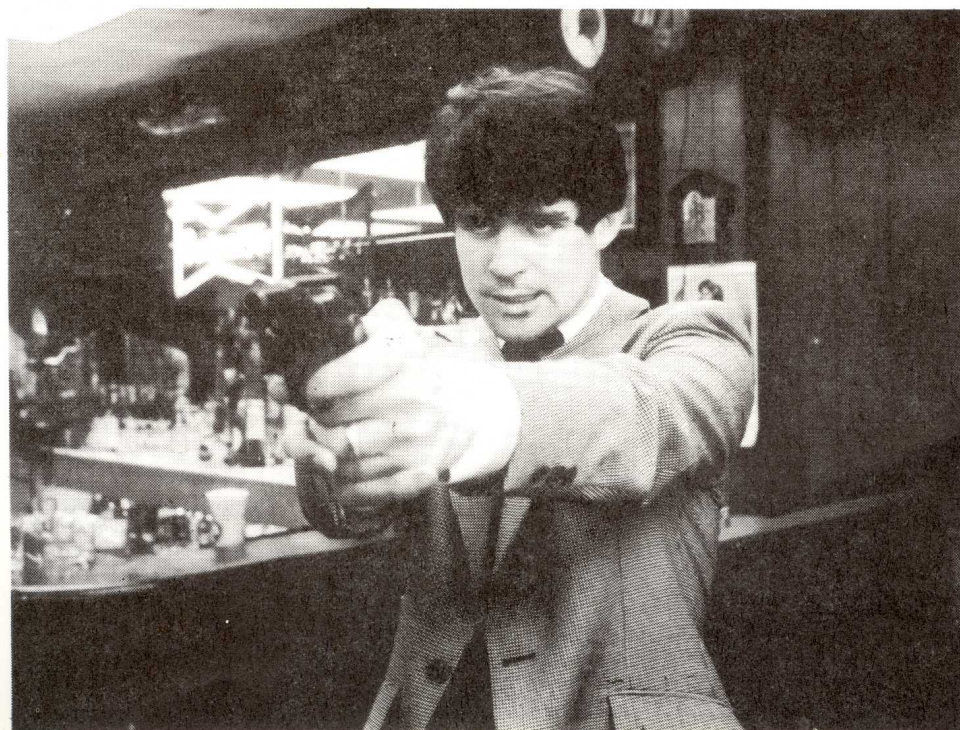
Director: Sylvester Stallone.
Script: Sylvester Stallone.
Photography: Laszlo Kovacs.
Music: Bill Conti.

Leading Players: Sylvester Stallone (*Cosmo Carboni*), Lee Canalito (*Victor 'Kid Salami' Carboni*), Armand Assante (*Lenny Carboni*), Frank McRay (*'Big Glory'*), Anne Archer (*Annie O'Sherlock*), Kevin Conway (*'Stitch' Mahon*).
Technicolor. Certificate A. 108 minutes (cut from 109).

With *Rocky III* upon us, one can only regret that Sylvester Stallone's working-class hero has been so quickly shunted into this particular rut. The commercial and critical failure of *Paradise Alley*, his first film as director and arguably his most interesting to date in any capacity to explore the roots of that hero, must have been to a large extent responsible. Not that *Paradise Alley* has any claim to working-class realism, and it is centred on a boxing arena, the fabulous *Paradise Alley*—an escape hatch from Hell's Kitchen to uptown Manhattan—more fantastical than anything in *Rocky*. But of all his films it is the most expansive with precisely those qualities of colourful ethnicity which *Rocky* vindicated at the box-office, before confining them within its own formula. From there it has been a short slide to the specious working-class morality of *F.I.S.T.* and the all-purpose heroics of *Escape to Victory*.

Three Italian-American brothers (to expand and transplant Rosi's title) live a kind of grown-up version of Dead End Kids' existence in the Bronx. The simple but immensely powerful Vic (Lee Canalito) delivers ice; Lenny (Armand Assante), most articulate and educated of the three, physically and emotionally crippled by the war, lives out his hopelessness all too literally as an embalmer; and Cosmo (Stallone) dreams and schemes for a way to get all three of them to Valhalla, 'uptown'. What keeps this fantasy honest, principally, is language, a distillation of Cosmo's street wisdom and ghetto frustration in an endlessly inventive profusion of inanities, vanities and wheedling dreams of success. His gift for the tortured *non sequitur* had already stood Stallone in good stead in the otherwise irredeemably bland *F.I.S.T.* But in the Runyonesque landscape of *Paradise Alley*, the facility comes triumphantly into its own, a weapon of those who know how to articulate their needs even if they can't spell them. Significantly, only when the film dallies with the love life of quasi-middle-class Lenny does it lose its grip and drift towards sentimentality. But Stallone's skills as actor, writer (and director, inevitably the third factor in this ensemble) are delightfully evident in one scene—combining miserabilism with comedy of the grotesque—in which the three brothers are seen rousing themselves one morning from the impossible shambles of their apartment.

Richard Combs



Treat Williams in 'Prince of the City'

RETROSPECTIVE



DETOUR

(July 7)

Director: Edgar G. Ulmer.
U.S.A., 1945.
Script: Martin Goldsmith.
Photography: Benjamin H. Kline.
Leading Players: Tom Neal (*Robert*), Ann Savage (*Vera*).
Black and white. Certificate A. 65 minutes. 16 mm.

There seem to be two tenets of faith for anyone who champions poverty row directors like Edgar G. Ulmer, both headily exemplified by the piece on Ulmer by Myron Meisel in *Kings of the Bs*. The first is that his material is overwhelmingly bad (of *Detour*, 'the story is beneath trash') and that by any normal standards, the execution has as little to recommend it ('Ulmer worked on the lowest depths of Poverty Row, far beyond the pale of the B film into the seventh circle of the Z picture, shooting his films in dingy studios on makeshift sets, on lightning-swift schedules'). The next stage of the argument is less a realistic appraisal of what Ulmer managed to achieve within these limitations than an act of religious exaltation, an assertion of the transcendental power of Ulmer's vision which, given the wretchedness of his means, has to read in some way as a comment on the wretchedness of man's state. The prose becomes the critical equivalent of holy rolling: '... a world cognizant of the legitimacy of nightmare, of encompassing despair unable to muffle the cries of profound spiritual pain'; '... oppressive spasms of unsatisfied sex, mysterious rituals to be observed without understanding, hollow soundings in a hopeless vacuum'.

This is the B-movie cult with a kamikaze bent, evidently set on entombing itself along with its subject in a private Stygian chamber (it is a curious assumption that the more hellish-sounding the director's 'vision' can be made to seem, the more profound or truthful it must inevitably be). In fact, the story of *Detour* is quite ingenious, allowing for multiple implausibilities

and the deliriously clipped telegraphese of its telling (neither being the sole province of the B-movie). Ulmer himself has said of the story (based, apparently, on a book by Anthony Quinn's brother-in-law), 'I was always in love with the idea and with the main character, a boy who plays piano in Greenwich Village and really wants to be a decent pianist. He's so down on his luck that the girl who goes to the Coast is the only person he can exist with sex-wise—the *Blue Angel* thing'. The film's reference points would be *Phantom Lady* (for the identification of sex and music) and *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (for the criminal propensities of *amour fou*), rather than *The Blue Light*. But its ironies, in fact, are very nicely turned: the hero takes to the road to rejoin his dream girl in California, only to meet on the way her demonic alter ego, a woman who divines and exploits his every mistake and weakness. The discrepancy in acting styles, between Tom Neal's petulant inadequacy and Ann Savage's strident scheming, certainly intensifies the sense of misery. But the fatalism of the film, its doom-laden atmosphere, remains almost affectingly squalid, and it does *Detour* a disservice to launch it, on reams of purple prose, into a more cosmic sphere.

Richard Combs

D.O.A.

(July 7)

Director: Rudolph Maté.
U.S.A., 1949.
Script: Russell Rouse, Clarence Greene.
Photography: Ernest Laszlo.
Music: Dimitri Tiomkin.
Leading Players: Edmond O'Brien (*Frank Bigelow*), Pamela Britton (*Paula*), Luther Adler (*Majak*), William Ching (*Halliday*), Beverly Campbell (*Miss Foster*).
Black and white. Certificate A. 81 minutes.

Nothing quite so becomes *D.O.A.* as its initial premise: a man walks into a police station and asks to report a murder—his own. The film then spirals out in flashback, as he recounts this

discovery, during a holiday in San Francisco, that he had been poisoned and his subsequent efforts, during an allotted life-span of some twenty-four hours, to find out by whom, how and why. The course of his revenge becomes so crowded with twists, possible culprits and changes of location that this dramatic compression is rather dispelled (a characteristically over-elaborated score by Dimitri Tiomkin is similarly *de trop*). But Rudolph Maté, never one of the most celebrated even of down-market directors (his best work may have been in his Westerns), drives headlong through all absurdities, and establishes—particularly in the early scenes, before the chase begins to accelerate—a nicely disoriented sense of the out-of-towner who feels himself getting more and more out of his depth. It all seems a naturally unnatural progression from the round-the-clock party in his hotel to the femme fatale who is so accessible in a smoky jazz club to his discovery that someone (in the words of *Dr. Strangelove*'s General Jack Ripper) has tampered with his vital bodily fluids.

Richard Combs

I LIVE IN FEAR (Ikimono No Kiroku)

(July 15)

Director: Akira Kurosawa.
Japan, 1955.
Script: Sinobu Hashimoto, Hideo Oguni, Akira Kurosawa.
Photography: Asakazu Nakai.
Music: Fumio Hayasaka, Masaru Sato.
Leading Players: Toshiro Mifune (*Kiichi Nakajima*), Minoru Chiaki (*Jiro Nakajima*), Ekio Miyoshi (*Toyo Nakajima*), Yutaka Sada (*Ichiro Nakajima*), Haruko Togo (*Yoshi Nakajima*).
Black and white. English subtitles. Certificate A. 103 minutes (cut from 113).

In 1978-79 the Lab mounted a major retrospective of the work of the great Japanese director Akira Kurosawa, and we have since shown his award-

winning *Kagemusha*. One of the films that was unavailable in Britain at the time of our retrospective was the director's 1955 work *Ikimono No Kiroku* (*I Live in Fear*, but also known under the title *Record of a Living Being*). The film was therefore produced not only in the wake of Hiroshima and Nagasaki but also soon after the experimental nuclear explosions carried out by Russia, America and Britain. These experiments met with an enormous wave of protest from the Japanese people, who formed a massive peace movement. Kurosawa presented his own fears in this film, which is humanitarian in its approach and attempts to address itself to people of all political persuasions. Its belated release in Britain has been prompted by the recent revival in the world-wide demand for nuclear disarmament.

The central character, Kiichi Nakajima, is the proprietor of a large foundry which he runs with the aid of his family. It is a profitable concern and his shrewd business mind and dedication have helped him amass a considerable fortune over the years. The foundry provides the livelihood both for his immediate family and for the offspring of his three mistresses. When Kiichi suddenly announces his intention of abandoning the business and emigrating to Brazil to escape the threat of the atom bomb, his family are horrified. They place the matter in the hands of the Family Court in the hope that he will be declared mentally incompetent and incapable of running the factory. After a great deal of deliberation, the Court reluctantly declares a verdict, in favour of the family. Deprived of the principal interest in his life, Kiichi's fears become increasingly obsessive, so that a mere lightning flash reduces him to a shuddering mass of terror. Since he cannot gain access to his own funds because they have been frozen by the Court, he approaches his mistresses in order to raise the amount to purchase the farm in Brazil. He tries to regain some of the money which he has given as an allowance over the years, but his efforts have little success. Distraught, he arrives at the only possible solution. He sees the foundry, the source of his family's wealth, as the reason for their obdurate refusal to leave Japan. By destroying this obstacle, there will be no further motive for them to remain. He sets fire to the factory, but only realises the extent of his actions when he is bitterly rebuked by his workers. Kiichi is then admitted to an asylum, where he spends his days in a calm, trance-like state, believing he is existing on another planet, safe from the horrors of the bomb.

Considering the film in the light of Kurosawa's work as a whole in a review for the *Monthly Film Bulletin* (May 1982), Chris Auty notes that *I Live in Fear* "is less concerned with the objective memory of Nagasaki and Hiroshima than with the course of an obsession, and with the problems of traditional Japanese family structures in the nuclear age". "As the film directly preceding



'Guys and Dolls'

Throne of Blood", Auty continues, "its themes are constantly, almost overwhelmingly, Shakespearean. The sight of the patriarch gradually disintegrating as he recognises the selfishness and ingratitude of his grasping family might have been culled from *King Lear*; the central irony—motives and its values—suggests *Hamlet*. In that sense, the rediscovery of the film from Kurosawa's most productive period (one year after *The Seven Samurai*, three after *Ikiru*) provides a fascinating case-study in the debate about his aesthetic: is he the masterful and essentially traditional Japanese humanist 'discovered' at the Venice Film Festival in 1950 with *Rashomon*, or the disenchanted auteur 'unable to reconcile Japan and the West, driven back into the dead rituals of the samurai' (David Thomson)? *I Live in Fear* suggests that this polarity in itself is unsatisfactory for the film is explicitly more of a study than a product of contradictions within Japanese culture and of the conflicting values of West and East . . ."

GUYS AND DOLLS

(September 9-14)

Director: Joseph L. Mankiewicz.
U.S.A., 1955.

Script: Joseph L. Mankiewicz, adapted from the story by Damon Runyon.

Photography: Harry Stradling.

Songs: Frank Loesser.

Choreography: Michael Kidd.

Leading players: Marlon Brando (*Sky Masterson*), Jean Simmons (*Sarah Brown*), Frank Sinatra (*Nathan Detroit*), Vivian Blaine (*Adelaide*), Stubby Kaye (*Nicely-Nicely Johnson*), Robert Keith (*Lt. Brannigan*).

Colour/Scope. Certificate A. 149 minutes.

Michael Kidd's choreography kicks *Guys and Dolls* off to a racing start that leaves you breathless. A hustling, bustling introduction to the denizens of Runyon's Times Square, it strings tarts and touts, pedestrians and pickpockets, street vendors and strippers, gamblers, cops and gawping tourists into a frenetic strip cartoon that interweaves little biographies of petty sin and innocent pleasure with the inexhaustible invention of a canvas by Bosch. It is almost a relief when Nicely-Nicely Johnson, meeting up with two old racing cronies, slows the pace by drawing them into the exhilarating relaxation of a vocal trio rendering his gambler's lament, 'Fugue for Tin Horns'.

Made during the blockbuster Fifties, a time when critics (for very good reason, given the amount of padding that went into movies in those days) reacted suspiciously to anything aggrandised into 'Scope and running longer than 90 minutes, this Mankiewicz musical ran into some qualified hostility. Mankiewicz, that most literate of film-makers, was as usual accused of being too verbose. And as non-singing non-dancers, Marlon Brando and Jean Simmons somehow seemed to fail to fit in.

Now that the dust has settled, it can be seen that Mankiewicz knew exactly what he was doing. He, of all writer-directors, was peculiarly fitted to savour the essence of Runyon, which is a relish for words and grammar, their use and abuse. And if *Guys and Dolls* keeps pulling up to a stately trot after one of Michael Kidd's wilder gallops, it is precisely in imitation of a Runyon story, where two guys meet on a street corner, one telling a rambling story while the other marvels at the deviousness which finally gets to the point with the kick of a horse. The bet between Sky



Masterson and Nathan Detroit, a simple plot device designed to spark the required romance between gambling guy and Salvation Army doll, would be nothing were it not wrapped up in the intricate verbal evasions of Nathan's subterfuge about the average daily consumption of strudel and cheesecake, evasions capped by Sky's elliptically pointed recollections about his daddy's advice on how to avoid 'getting cider in your ear' when confronted by a con-man. Equally, this purely verbal scene is such sheer delight because it is propelled from the springboard of a delirious Kidd number ('The Oldest Established Permanent Floating Crap Game').

As for Brando and Simmons, they really need no defence now that Rex Harrison's recitatives in *My Fair Lady* have given non-musical performers (often used by Mamoulian to brilliant effect, even back in the Thirties) musical respectability. Suffice it to say that they not only lend a genuine lyricism to what might otherwise have been a conventional romance, but—acting as a Method counterbalance to the more traditional showbiz coupling of Sinatra and Vivian Blaine—they lead the whole film into an emotional depth and conviction rare in musicals. Practically the only complaint, apart from minor faults in pacing, is that someone saw fit to replace that marvellous Frank Loesser number for Vivian Blaine, 'A Bushel and a Peck', with the routinely vulgar 'Pet Me Poppa'. Two other substitutions, 'Adelaide' and 'A Woman in Love', replacing 'My Time of Day' and 'Marry the Man Today', are less disruptive.

Tom Milne



The first part of the film establishes the social background of the group, with Antonio Gades as the prototype: "Without education or culture, dancing was one of the ways out". This is redolent of one of Saura's characters in his first film, *Los Golfos* (*The Scoundrels*), made in 1959. Here it was the figure of the bullfighter—bullfighting was one of the possible avenues of escape from the drudging poverty of the southern province of Andalusia. Both, moreover, had shared the fate of thousands of Spaniards under Franco—one as immigrant in Madrid (*Los Golfos*), the other, Gades, immigrant in Paris. Unlike the bullfighter Juan, however, Gades is certainly a success What Saura appears to be saying is that despite (or maybe because of) the poverty and repression of the Francoist period, some, like Gades, have managed not only to create great art, but also to incorporate new elements into older forms. The study of contemporary dance in Paris led him to blend some of these techniques into the basic rhythms and steps of the classic Andalusian dance, Flamenco. In this way Gades and his unique dance style become a symbol of the Francoist era and its contradictions, particularly as it affected Andalusia. And if we are going to celebrate the triumph of Andalusian art, who better than Lorca, the other great Andalusian, poetic symbol of a cultural renaissance which was, like Lorca, killed by the Francoist machine? What unites and separates them both is, of course, the Civil War, one of the main themes which has informed most of Saura's work—albeit rather obliquely at times, because of the censor.

And here we can detect another strand in the film: a certain parallel with Saura the film-maker. Although from a different class, Saura the radical artist suffered from the rigours of censorship at the hands of the same victors of the civil contest. Censorship, repression—yes, new art has been created out of these twin pillars of Francoism (Gades and Saura), but Spanish society was also put 'on ice' for those forty-three years (the establishing shot tableau). It is this, the other side of the dialectic, which links the first part of the film with Lorca's play. The inability to find free sexual expression, manifested in jealousies and violence with its necessarily destructive end, is buttressed above all by the family, but also by the Church (the photographs the woman dancer pins up are of a child and Christ). The Gades dancing troupe, as a microcosm of present-day Spain, have interiorised the age-old values that Lorca described in 1933. The dancers may have developed as artists (just as Spain has industrialised), but men and women still inhabit very different worlds (the scenes in the dressing-rooms: while the women admit to nervousness, the men still feel the need to cover it up by a *machismo* flourish).

Here, too, Saura restates one of the constant concerns of most of his film work. From *La Caza* (*The Hunt*), made in 1965, to *Mamá cumple 100 años* (*Mother Who is 100 Years Old*), made in 1979, the theme of the tenacious persistence of the past, through the structure of the bourgeois family, was

explored by looking at the bourgeoisie itself. Saura has said that these were very much 'his' films—this was a world he knew personally and found it easier and more illuminating to look at. In his last film prior to *Blood Wedding*, *Deprisa, Deprisa* (*Hurry, Hurry*), these same values were seen to persist even amongst a 'marginal' Madrid group (dope-smoking teenage bank robbers). *Blood Wedding* seems to confirm that, though the 'subjects' he chooses to film may have changed (and this may necessitate a change in film style), he nonetheless continues to point out the duality within Spanish society.

However, *Blood Wedding* is partly a homage to Gades and Lorca. Moreover, the violence and destruction is 'acted-out'. Perhaps this heralds a more optimistic Saura. Surely, he seems to be saying, if this kind of art can be created out of repression, maybe there is some hope for us Spaniards after all.

Maggie Torres

BLOOD WEDDING (Bodas de Sangre)

(July 8-13)

Director: Carlos Saura.
Spain, 1981.

Based on the play by Federico Garcia Lorca. Ballet adaptation: Alfredo Mañas.

Dialogue: Carlos Saura.

Photography: Teodoro Escamilla.

Music: Emilio de Diego.

Leading Players: Antonio Gades (*Leonardo*), Christina Hoyos (*The Bride*), Juan Antonio (*The Bridegroom*), Pilar Cárdenas (*The Mother*), Carmen Villena (*The Wife*), El Güito.

Eastman Colour. English subtitles. Certificate U. 72 minutes.

For those familiar with Carlos Saura's films from the mid-sixties to the late seventies, *Blood Wedding* may seem a radical departure from his earlier surrealist/introspective style. Saura himself seemed to confirm this when he said: "I feel liberated now from a series of moral obligations, of certain responsibilities which we would call social. Since Franco's death I have felt free of those obligations and have decided to take a look at other aspects of my life which I feel are essential". One of these concerns was to show the differences and the difficulties of the visual transposition of literary works.

But why, one asks, should Saura choose the medium of the dance as vehicle for this transposition? While *Blood Wedding* undoubtedly remains faithful to Lorca's idea of theatre as 'spectacle', it nonetheless omits certain scenes which would have placed the work in its socio-historical context. (I refer here primarily to the scene where the marriage arrangements are made. The question of land ownership and the family in 1930s Spain and the correspondingly isolated role of women within this social context would have seemed to be crucial in understanding the violent *dénouement*.) I would suggest therefore that it is precisely in its omissions and its stark symbolism and not in its faithful reconstruction of Lorca's work that the 'key' to the meanings of *Blood Wedding* is to be found. Moreover, what Saura has 'added' to Lorca's play is precisely another socio-historical reality. (These two interlinking themes suggest a greater continuity with Saura's previous work, in terms of his concerns, than may appear by concentrating on the stylistic break.)

Supporting film:

DEL MERO CORAZÓN

This is a lyrical journey through the heart of Chicago culture, as reflected in the love songs of the Tex-Mex Nortena music tradition. Love songs are the poetry of daily life—a poetry of passion and death, hurt and humour, pleasures and torn desire. In the film these songs travel from intimate family gatherings to community dance halls; they are passed along, changed into new songs but always sung from the heart.

(Director: Les Blank. U.S.A., 1979. Featuring: Leo Garza, Chavela Ortiz, Brown Express, Little Joe, La Familia, and others. Colour. 16mm. 20 minutes).

VICTOR/VICTORIA

(July 22-24)

Director: Blake Edwards.

Script: Blake Edwards. Based on the film *Viktor und Viktoria* (UFA, 1933), written and directed by Reinhold Schuenzel.

Photography: Dick Bush.

Music: Henry Mancini. Lyrics: Leslie Bricusse.

Leading Players: Julie Andrews (*Victoria Grant/Count Victor Grazinski*), James Garner (*King Marcham*), Robert Preston (*Carroll "Toddy" Todd*), Lesley Ann Warren (*Norma*), Alex Karras (*Squash*).

Technicolor/Scope. Certificate AA. 134 minutes.

The secret of Blake Edwards' success might be so dirty that it would be better not to know. Since his return to commercial and artistic form in '10'—his first success outside of *The Pink Panther* formula



for sixteen years—his films have been increasingly about the kind of behavioural 'peculiarities' which cause skeletons to flourish in family cupboards. The worm under the rose is sex. In *S.O.B.*, sex becomes the principal form of currency for success in that society: any kind of success but, then again, any kind of sex. The society, needless to say, is Hollywood. In *Victor/Victoria* a down-at-heel soprano in 1930s Paris (the scenes of her impoverishment are beautifully filmed) achieves fame and fortune by posing as a *female* impersonator and her disguise unleashes a whole host of confusions about sexual attitudes, roles and identities.

One could regard Edwards' latest three films as an unofficial trilogy on the New Morality. What Edwards has attempted to do is re-define Hollywood romantic conventions from a fresh perspective that now includes the Women's Movement and Gay Lib (which is the reason he fought such a bitter war against what he saw as the old-fashioned sexist advertising campaign of '10'). The articulate objections of feminist and gay commentators to certain conventions and stereotypes of the classic Hollywood cinema have enabled Edwards to foreground various aspects of his work that he felt obliged to disguise or suppress during the more prurient years of the Fifties and Sixties. His secret weapon is his wife, Julie Andrews, whose screen persona has been steadily revised by Edwards since *Darling Lili* in 1970 (since then she has not worked with any other director). The conjunction of the bitterest of post-war Hollywood comedy directors, Edwards, with that erstwhile siren of spoonfuls of sugar, Miss Andrews, has made for a strange and intoxicating brew.

Victor/Victoria releases a hornet's nest of previously subterranean Edwards' obsessions. Repressed homosexuality has figured strongly in films as far apart as *The Wild Rovers*, *The Tamarind Seed* and '10': it often complicates, even humanises, characters who were previously smugly complacent about their own machismo and so it does quite explicitly in *Victor/Victoria*. Transvestism has figured tangentially in the plot of *Gunn*, where such sexual aberration is directly related to a character's villainy, and marginally in *S.O.B.* to satirise Robert Vaughn's icy film producer, but in *Victor/Victoria* such bisexual concerns are at the centre of the film. Conventional notions of sexuality and the heterosexual couple suddenly become vulnerable, and grateful confessions seep into the liberated atmosphere after years of glum conformity to social norms. In *Victor/Victoria*, Edwards is no longer aspiring to be Lubitsch or even Billy Wilder. The décor, the *mise en scène*, the whole film's revision of sexual roles, and an overt visual clue in the opening scene suddenly give you the key to his use of Julie Andrews: he wants to be von Sternberg to her Dietrich.

In fact, the nightclub scenes are superb. The songs, shot in darkness that is illuminated by solitary spots of light—a red carnation, gleaming pink décor—have a nocturnal romanticism that is

quintessential Edwards. So is the comic mayhem, in which strategic use of a cockroach in a plan not to pay for a meal can provide him with sufficient inspiration for a ten minute sequence of beautiful playing (from Julie Andrews, Robert Preston, and Graham Stark) and classic slapstick invention. His comedy is characteristically cruel, violent and humiliating, penetrating all protective armour. Voices cut through glass, lightning shatters umbrellas, and characters are left at the end nursing bruises, broken bones and wounded pride.

Edwards' attitudes are modern but years of Hollywood coding have left their mark and the sexual truths the Julie Andrews character has to spell out for a baffled James Garner sometimes seem not so much rude as rudimentary. And if the heroine weeps at the opera and the man loves boxing, is that not actually reinforcing stereotypes, rather than exploring or challenging them? In the second part, the film boxes itself into some pretty strange corners, and never really does work out what to do with the heterosexual bore, played by James Garner. His disorientating experience is clearly not what he thought was meant by gay Par-ee. But the film hesitates between treating him with the contempt he deserves or giving him the fright of his life.

Neil Sinyard

THE EUROPEANS

(July 21-23)

Director: James Ivory.

Great Britain, 1978.

Script: Ruth Prawer Jhabvala. Based on the novel by Henry James.

Photography: Larry Pizer.

Music: Richard Robbins.

Leading Players: Lee Remick (*Eugenia*), Robin Ellis (*Robert Acton*), Wesley Addy (*Mr. Wentworth*), Tim Choate (*Clifford Wentworth*).

Eastman Colour. Certificate U. 90 minutes.

Of all contemporary directors, James Ivory is the one who seems closest to the Jamesian sensibility. He is an American who has spent much of his life abroad (like Henry James), and this no doubt accounts for his Jamesian fascination with the conflicts which arise between people of different cultures, in films such as *Shakespeare Wallah* and *Autobiography of a Princess*. Like James also, Ivory is fascinated by cultures and societies which seem at the twilight of their development, grimly existing in the present but with their hearts in the past and resisting for as long as possible a pull towards the future. He is the ideal director for *The Europeans*, a story set in Boston a decade before the American Civil War (the novel was written about a decade after, in 1878) and dealing with the

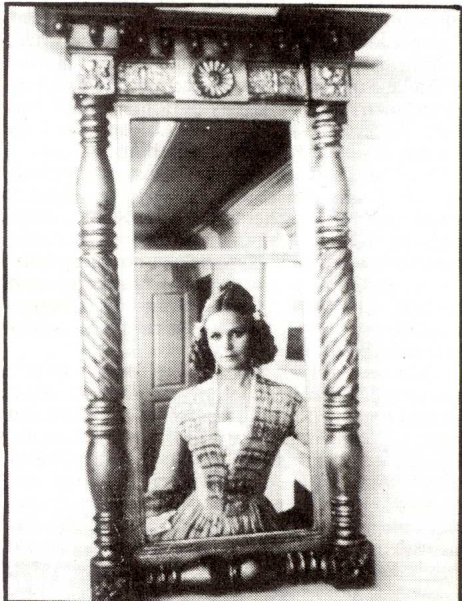
impact on a wealthy American family, the Wentworths, of a visit from their sophisticated, attractive and fortune-hunting cousins, Eugenia and Felix.

Although the events of the narrative might seem little more than a series of courtesy calls, one is made constantly aware of the importance of the issues at stake: the confrontation tests the values by which people live. The Europeans threaten the stability of the society in which they intrude, even whilst providing the vehicle for some gentle social comedy. The horror of old Mr. Wentworth (the superb Wesley Addy) at these European affectations is a major source of the film's amusement, yet also a major source of its tension. He only just manages to control his displeasure at Felix's frivolity, whose fascination for Wentworth's impressionable daughters undermines the standards by which Wentworth has ordered his life and his home. On the other side, the Europeans are genuinely attracted by the American innocence, making Eugenia, in particular, more aware of limitations in herself and of something precious in her life which she has lost. In Lee Remick's performance, one senses a poise and style precariously suppressing an underlying panic and emptiness.

There is a wonderful moment early on in the film when the cousins have all met, and Mr. Wentworth says, gravely, "You have come very far". The remark stops Eugenia momentarily in her flight of strenuous graciousness and, unaccountably, almost reduces her to tears. Is she acting for sympathy? Momentarily, in Lee Remick's face, we sense a sudden confusion: gratitude that she might at last have landed in a haven of rest; but also a chilling awareness of the unintended irony of Mr. Wentworth's remark—of what a disappointing journey her life has actually been. At a moment like this, where Eugenia might already sense her future failure, we have a hint of what James might have meant when he referred surprisingly to his "imagination of disaster" and his vision of life as "ferocious and cruel".

The tension in the film is probably felt most acutely in the relationship which develops between Eugenia and Robert Acton. Acton (finely played by Robin Ellis) is an admirable figure who is nevertheless always in danger of putting humanity on a pedestal. The soft-focus imaginings he has of Eugenia are very appropriate here, as is his exquisite gift for her: a jade ornament evoking his remote idealised image of Eugenia and a gift which is eventually to go to his sister when Acton discovers that Eugenia has a flaw. An incident of subdued farce is enough to knock Acton's ideals awry and upset the relationship sufficiently to ensure that its fragile balance can never quite be restored.

Eugenia has potential but her bitter experience of life has encrusted her with a self-protective veneer of cynicism which, in this case, is to deny her what she wants. (This is unlike her more superficial brother who winds up with everything.) There is a finely sustained and acutely uncomfortable party scene where her gushing affection, to some extent prompted by the cruelty of Acton's sister, presents a false picture of her to the others which can never entirely be eradicated. Nevertheless, even under the most massive blows of fortune and emotional disillusionment, she has a resilience which enables



her to retain a sense of self-esteem—always one of the most attractive aspects of both Ivory's and James's view of characters.

The photography is very skilful, almost oppressively autumnal as if taking its tones not from the young lovers but from Eugenia and the fading world of Mr. Wentworth. The finest kind of calculation has gone into the characterisation, conveyed as much in looks and gestures as well as anything spoken; and into the way the places carry accretions of character details; and into the exemplary acting from all the cast. The fact that the film's virtues are unemphatic should not blind a viewer to their distinction. "Ultimately neither better nor worse than the average BBC serial" was *International Film Guide's* dismissive comment—we should be so lucky.

Neil Sinyard

THE END OF AUGUST

(July 21-23)

Director: Bob Graham.

Script: Eula Seaton, Leon Heller. Based on the novel *The Awakening* by Kate Chopin.

Photography: Bob Elswit.

Music: Shirley Walker.

Leading Players: Sally Sharp (*Edna Pontellier*), Lilia Skala (*Mlle. Reisz*), David Marshall Grant (*Robert*), Kathleen Widdoes (*Adele*), Paul Roebling (*Leonce Pontellier*), Paul Shenar (*Arobin*).

Technicolor. Certificate A. 105 minutes.

"There is an elegant gentleness about this romantic tale set in the summer of 1900. You sigh for the world that moves with a slower grace—no violence, nobody mutters 'bullshit' every fourth or fifth word. And yet the heroine is her own woman and as up-to-date in her longing for flexibility and for an identity that means being more than just a wife and a mother. Edna Pontellier is indeed an Edwardian Ms.

"She and her husband Leonce, who one could safely say tolerate one another, are conventional pillars of New Orleans society. But underneath the starched shirtwaisters and those oh so quaint bathing-dresses which, if worn in an office today would hardly raise an eyebrow, beats a heart longing for romance. And it beats even more feverishly at the nearness of Robert, a young man who flits like a moth around a candle midst the party of friends who are making their yearly summer pilgrimage to Clear Point, Alabama.

"Clear Point, oh where is your equal today? The small elegant hotel, the long quiet stretches of beach, the moonlight on restless Atlantic breakers, a young man and an older woman forced to deny their happy ending.

"Robert fears the inevitable unhappy ending if they pursue their love affair and takes himself off to Mexico. For Edna, this is emotional devastation and at the end of August, when everyone, and that means the Aristocratic Creoles of New Orleans, returns to the city, she takes a small house away from the family while her husband is away. This new found independence means spending time painting, talking long hours and the wise old Mlle. Reisz, and having a love affair with a dashing horse-owner, Arobin.

"Edna Pontellier has found herself (as they say in all the best analysis parlours today) and when Robert returns to New Orleans she tells him about her deep feelings for him.

"Another sigh. Is happiness at last on the cards for this handsome couple? Sadly, no. Like a melodrama of an earlier age, young Robert is too confused to take what fate has offered and once again he leaves Edna. But she can no longer pursue a meaningless future with husband and children, and quietly she slips out of the house, returning to the beach and those relentless Atlantic breakers....

"There is so much I hate about today's world, and its weekly reflections on celluloid, I reach out and grasp with both hands all the charm and elegance I can find in story, film, clothes or environment. And this film, made by a handful of people without the backing of Hollywood and the studio system, has that same magic, if not quite 100 per cent, of *The Europeans* and the Australian success *My Brilliant Career*...."

Extract from a review by Audrey Smith, published in *Films*, November 1981.

THREE FASSBINDERS



THE MARRIAGE OF MARIA BRAUN

(Die Ehe der Maria Braun)

(July 24, 25).

Director: Rainer Werner Fassbinder.

West Germany, 1978.

Script: Peter Märthesheimer, Pea Fröhlich. Based on an idea by Rainer Werner Fassbinder.

Photography: Michael Ballhaus.

Music: Peer Raben.

Leading Players: Hanna Schygulla (*Maria Braun*), Klaus Löwitsch (*Hermann Braun*), Ivan Desny (*Karl Oswald*), Gottfried John (*Willi Klenze*), Gisela Uhlen (*Mother*), Günther Lamprecht (*Hans Wetzel*).

Fujicolor. English subtitles. Certificate AA. 119 minutes.

This is one of Fassbinder's most popular and easily approachable films, far less highly formalised and claustrophobic than, say, *The Bitter Tears of Petra von Kant* or *Chinese Roulette* and much closer to the openness of *Fear Eats the Soul* and *Fox*. It begins with a picture of Hitler and ends with photos of Chancellors Adenauer, Erhardt, Kiesinger and Schmidt—what comes in between is a history of Germany from 1939 to the present day in the form of a love story, or rather, since Fassbinder is never simplistic or schematic, a love story set firmly against history.

Maria and Hermann Braun are married hurriedly and chaotically in the early days of the war, during an Allied air-raid. Almost immediately Hermann is ordered to the Russian front, from which he fails to return in 1945. Believing her husband dead, Maria takes up with Bill, a black American sergeant, only to be surprised in *flagrante delicto* by Hermann's sudden reappearance. In the ensuing struggle Maria accidentally kills Bill, a crime for which Hermann takes the blame and is imprisoned. Maria promises to wait for him and to do everything in her power to prepare a good life for them when he is released. Meeting Karl Oswald, a rich industrialist, she charms him so completely that he both falls in love with her and gives her a high position in his firm. So begins her steady, calculating rise through Germany's post-war economic 'miracle', the *Wirtschaftswunder*.

Fassbinder sets this story of a post-war triumph

of the will firmly within a melodramatic framework and like Sirk, Vidor and Stahl before him he utilises the familiar themes of unrequited love, female self-sacrifice and star-crossed fortune to devastating effect. Of course, Fassbinder isn't subject to the same constraints as his Hollywood mentors and is able to foreground political and ideological issues in a manner they might have envied. Thus the dramatic intensity which he creates is as analytical and thought-provoking as it is sentimental, and he is as interested in the world surrounding his characters as in their fraught relationships. However, even if to some extent he *does* take the Hollywood melodrama or 'women's picture' and stand it on its head, or at least make its covert, underlying themes absolutely clear, *Maria Braun* is as absorbing as a self-contained narrative and heated personal drama as a political parable. Thus Maria doesn't exist simply as a metaphor for post-war Germany: she is also that comparative cinematic rarity, a strong and believable female character. Oswald, moreover, is no caricatured German fat cat capitalist but an urbane and sensitive liberal humanist, a representative of the cultural *haute bourgeoisie* who can wearily say of post-war Germany: 'I live in a country called Insanity'.

Particularly interesting is the way in which, through the figure of Maria, Fassbinder reworks the theme, so central to Hollywood melodrama, of the woman trying to make it in a man's world. Maria's tragedy has nothing to do with the usual predestined failure, the 'inevitable' consequence of forsaking the traditional female role—rather, it has everything to do with her success. In her climb up the social ladder Maria gradually loses her qualities of sympathy, intuition, warmth and becomes increasingly cynical, hard, competitive and acerbic. In other words she abandons many of the positive qualities normally associated with 'femaleness' and adopts many of the negative ones normally associated with 'maleness'. Thus, while Maria may indeed be one of the strongest female characters in recent cinema, she is no idealised feminist heroine. She uses rather than questions the patriarchal system in her quest for a better life. As Ruth McCormick puts it in *Cinéaste*, (Spring 1980): 'Despite Maria's hard work and material success, she has learned nothing new; her rise becomes her fall from happiness. The woman who once believed in miracles finds herself incapable of feeling: more than once, she declares that the times are bad for emotions. Despite her strength and seeming independence, she never really liberates herself. In the long run, she has given too

much of herself to a system oriented toward competition, performance and pollution (signified by Maria's becoming a chain smoker) to be capable of fulfilling her desire for love and transcendence. She has betrayed her own commitment to life, grown materially but not spiritually.'

On a metaphorical level Maria clearly represents a Germany gradually slipping back into a pattern of authoritarianism, whilst the absent Hermann seems to signify for her a shining, almost metaphysical idea of love and happiness—the kind of transcendence yearned for by all the great German Idealist philosophers. To quote McCormick again: 'To Fassbinder and his scenarists, Maria Braun represents the best and worst in the German character. She is disciplined, hard-working, beautiful, intelligent and, at least in the beginning, a person with high ideals. She is also, however, compulsive, assured of her superiority, competitive, conniving and, though rigid, easily able to unconsciously compromise herself.' *Maria Braun* is the story of success at a price—a loss of emotions, a coldness now considered to be characteristic of the Germans. Of course, all this is a familiar Fassbinder theme—it doesn't take much to see that he is intensely dissatisfied with the supposed 'miracles' of modern German capitalism. What *does* seem to mark off Fassbinder from so much 'progressive' or 'socially critical' cinema is his lack of schematism, of easy answers, and the depth and deep-rootedness of the malaise which he portrays.

Julian Petley

LILI MARLEEN

(August 19-21)

Director: Rainer Werner Fassbinder.
West Germany, 1980.

Script: Manfred Purzer, Joshua Sinclair, Rainer Werner Fassbinder. Based on the novel *Der Himmel hat viele Farben* by Lale Andersen.

Photography: Xaver Schwarzenberger.

Music: Peer Raben. Song: "Lili Marleen" by Norbert Schultze, Hans Leis.

Leading Players: Hanna Schygulla (*Willie Bunterberg*), Giancarlo Giannini (*Robert Mendelssohn*), Mel Ferrer (*David Mendelssohn*), Karl Heinz von Hassel (*Hans Henkel*), Erik Schumann (*Von Strehow*), Hark Bohm (*Taschner*).
Colour. English subtitles. Certificate AA. 116 minutes.

Lili Marleen does not, strictly speaking, form part of Fassbinder's recent trilogy. The soon-to-be-

released *Veronika Voss* is the third of three films about women in post-war Germany and their involvement with Germany's *Wirtschaftswunder* (the so-called 'Economic Miracle' of the late Forties and Fifties). *Lili Marleen* is set in pre-war and wartime Germany, and it is not about a woman, but a song and a woman. Nonetheless, it has a great deal in common with the other two Fassbinder films in this programme.

First of all, it features another of Fassbinder's doughty heroines (Hanna Schygulla in a marvellous performance, although disgracefully prostituted by the advertising for the film, a combination of 'divine decadence' and the vulgarly—but accurately—named 'camiknickers interpretation of history'). *Lili Marleen* is about the song of the same title, which cut an extraordinarily successful swathe through both the German and Allied armies during the Second World War. It is also an uproariously funny and excessive melodrama about the song's interpreter, Willie Bunterberg, whose fortunes follow those of the song, from sleazy café to considerably more sleazy Nazi Fest (Tom Milne, in his *Monthly Film Bulletin* review of the film, refers to its moments of 'dotty grandeur'). But, as with *The Marriage of Maria Braun*, it would be a great mistake to underestimate the seriousness of Fassbinder's project simply because the film has a very high surface gloss and considerable levity of tone. The narrative is, like *Maria Braun*, partly about the indomitable love of the heroine for a man (in this case Giancarlo Giannini as a philanthropic and rich Jew) whose fortunes are less buoyant than her own. But there is a greater edge of irony in this story than in *Maria Braun*—indeed, one of the film's moments of highest comedy is of the torture of Willie's lover by the Gestapo, who play a cracked record of her song over and over again. As the lovers are parted again and again and repeatedly swear eternal fidelity and love to one another, the whole nature of obsessive, 'eternal' love is brought into question by the film's ruthless comic deflation of what should be its highest moments.

Like the other films in the canon, *Lili Marleen* is also about necessary (although not endorsed) compromise in the face of *force majeure*—in this case not the slow corruption of corporate life but the far quicker and more deadly menace of the Nazi machine at full strength. Willie Bunterberg is no fool: at her moment of greatest success she and her agent/lover recline in their snow-white apartment (courtesy of the S.S.) singing a modified version of her song: '... Profits ... with you, Lili Marleen, with you, Lili Marleen.' She is perfectly well aware of the nature of her compromise and absolutely determined to profit from it. The vulgarity, both of her performance

and of the film's presentation of the endless versions of the song which Willie is required to sing, very aptly underlines the empty bargain that she has made. Accusations of vulgarity levelled at Fassbinder are misplaced: of course the film is vulgar, but it is deliberately and effectively so.

Lili Marleen was greeted with howls of disapproval by most critics of the 'reputable' Press, and it has had nothing of the success of, say, István Szabó's *Mephisto*, another film (and a very fine one) about the personally damaging politics of compromise. This is a pity because, despite all its excesses and its jokey tone (Fassbinder himself at one point makes an hilariously overplayed appearance), *Lili Marleen* is both beautifully made and, I think, deeply serious in intent.

Marion Doyen

LOLA

(September 16-21)

Director: Rainer Werner Fassbinder.
West Germany, 1981.

Script: Peter Märthesheimer, Pea Fröhlich, Rainer Werner Fassbinder.

Photography: Xaver Schwarzenberger.

Music: Peer Raben.

Leading Players: Barbara Sukowa (*Lola*), Armin Mueller-Stahl (*von Bohm*), Mario Adorf (*Schuckert*), Matthias Fuchs (*Esslin*), Helga Feddersen (*Frau Hettich*).

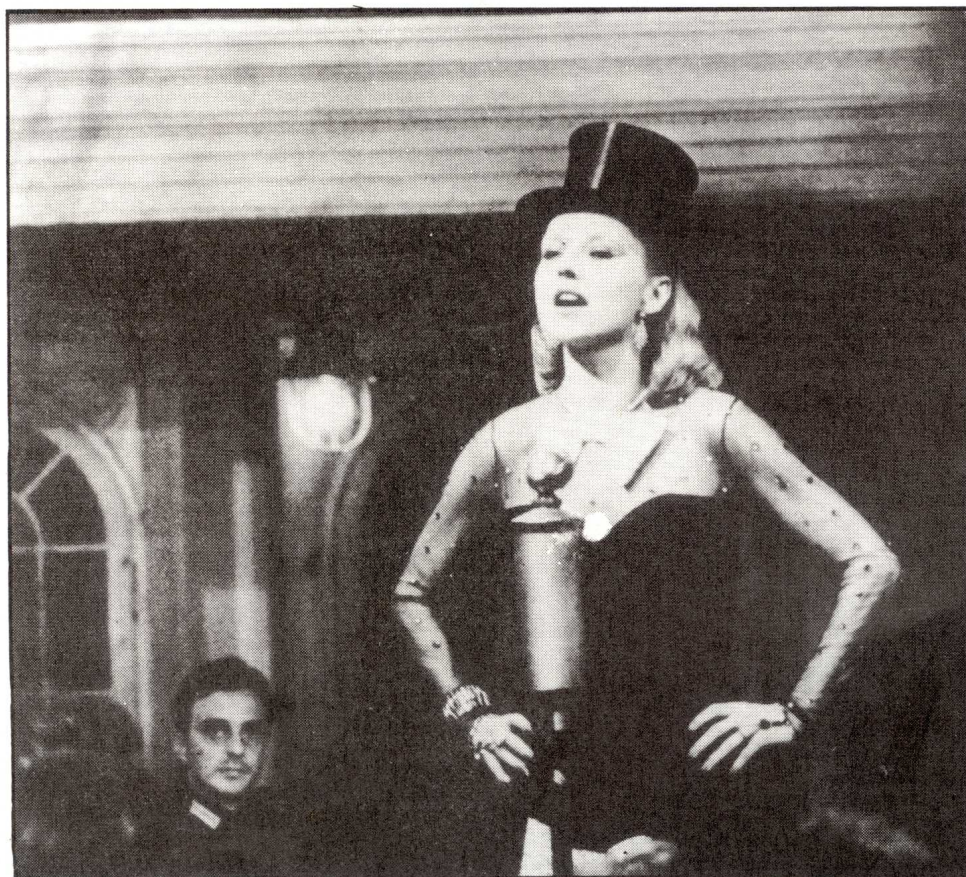
Colour. English subtitles. Certificate AA. 115 minutes.

In effect *Lola* is the second in a series of films in which Fassbinder is setting out to trace the social history of the German bourgeoisie since the war, *Maria Braun* being the first and *Veronika Voss*, this year's Berlin prize-winner, the third. It's a project of potentially Balzacian proportions.

Though its time-span is considerably shorter *Lola*, like *Maria Braun*, is very carefully located both temporally and socially. It's 1957, three years after the end of *Maria Braun*, and the height of the *Wirtschaftswunder*: in 1955 Germany had entered NATO, in 1956 the Communist Party was banned, and in 1957 Chancellor Adenauer (whose portrait looms large in the credit sequence) was returned for a third term of office. Adenauer's presence fairly dominates the film: his speeches are frequently heard on the radio, and photographs of him seem to be omnipresent.

The action is set in a small German provincial town whose affairs are largely in the pockets of building contractor Schuckert and his friends on the municipal council. He also owns the Villa Fink, a nightclub-cum-brothel, where Lola, a singer and occasional prostitute, is something of a local star. Suddenly a new building commissioner, von Bohm, is appointed and threatens to reorganise the council's affairs rather too dramatically for Schuckert's and his cronies' liking. Intrigued, Lola seduces him and he falls for her, completely unaware of her job. When he eventually discovers her at work at the Villa Fink, and realises that the good people of Coburg are leading double lives, he embarks on a massive drive against municipal corruption....

1957 also marked the height of Douglas Sirk's career, a time when the Hollywood melodrama had reached its self-conscious zenith. Like *Maria Braun*, *Lola* utilises Sirkian melodramatics to perfection, but rather differently, and with a strong dose of almost Buñuelian black humour. If *Maria Braun* utilises the structures and thematic motifs of melodrama then *Lola* takes Sirk's formal qualities—especially his use of colour and music—and turns them to quite delirious effect. This is one of Fassbinder's most stylish films, a ravishing Technicolor melodrama in garish reds, blues and greens with a musical score which insistently underlines for maximum effect. Though the shadow of Sirk looms large over the entire film, it's actually based on Heinrich Mann's novella *Professor Unrat* and thence on Sternberg's adaptation of it, *The Blue Angel*. However, of these it keeps only the narrative pretext, that of a 'respectable' girl. There the similarity ends, however; unlike Emil Jannings's professor, Mueller-Stahl's von Bohm is no prudish, self-pitying buffoon destroyed by the revelation of his own sexual hypocrisy; rather, he is an old-fashioned, rather 'Prussian' liberal humanist, not unlike Karl Oswald in *Maria Braun*, who sincerely



Hanna Schygulla in 'Lili Marleen'



Barbara Sukowa in 'Lola'

carries out his civic duties and responsibilities. Nor is Schuckert a cardboard villain and schemer—in fact he's rather likeably down-to-earth. Lola, too, isn't a destructive film noir *femme fatale*—indeed she exhibits a growing sense of self-revulsion in her dealings with von Bohm and is herself being used in a much bigger game. As Sheila Johnston puts it in *Films and Filming* (May 1982) she's 'Just another bargaining counter in a municipal Monopoly game.' In other words, Fassbinder's characters are not the Manichaean ciphers which too often populate stories of this sort.

Similarly, by using the surface features of Sirkian melodrama, Fassbinder totally rejects the naturalism that normally goes hand-in-hand with 'social' themes, the mania for minutely detailed reconstruction that usually accompanies *La mode rétro*. Once again Fassbinder refuses the 'obvious' format, the 'natural' style. *Lola* could so easily be a schematic, simplistic essay in 'social realism', an exposé of political and moral corruption behind a seemingly respectable bourgeois façade. But as films like *Satan's Brew* and *In a Year of Thirteen Moons* have shown, Fassbinder is far removed from the kind of 'socially conscious' cinema one associates with Volker Schlöndorff or Margarethe von Trotta, whose films often seem content with merely exposing the grosser iniquities of bourgeois society rather than examining the very mechanisms of the way that society works. What we see in *Lola* is not the gradual revelation that all isn't well (we know that already) but rather the honest, civic-minded von Bohm gradually being forced to accommodate himself to the 'realistic' ethics of capitalism triumphant. The drama underlying the Lola/von Bohm/Schuckert axis is the conflict between the ideals of liberalism and social democracy on the one hand, and the demands of *Realpolitik* in late capitalist society on the other. But unlike, say, Tavernier or Rosi, Fassbinder does not pass moral judgement on the rather abject state of affairs he portrays: in his films the gap between the high-sounding principles of bourgeois morality and the cynicism and pragmatism of the bourgeoisie in action is not a contradiction to be resolved, but a *constant* to be lived with. These are the *givens* of life in bourgeois society. As Chris Auty puts it in *Monthly Film Bulletin* (April 1982): 'Fassbinder . . . insists that we admit the lies, betrayals and hypocrisies of life not as tragic exceptions, but as *the rule*. At one point, when the vengeful von Bohm is trying to persuade a journalist of the town's corruption, he exclaims that the entrepreneurs are "conspiring to get rich" and is greeted with the astonished explanation that this seems perfectly "normal". Not so much a conspiracy as a society; and so it is.'

Julian Petley

NEW YORK, NEW YORK

(August 14-16)

Director: Martin Scorsese.

U.S.A., 1977.

Script: Earl Mac Rauch, Mardik Martin.

Photography: Laszlo Kovacs.

Music: George and Ira Gershwin, Rodgers and Hart, Duke Ellington, George Bassman, Ned Washington, and others.

Leading Players: Liza Minnelli (*Francine Evans*), Robert De Niro (*Jimmy Doyle*), Lionel Stander (*Tony Harwell*), Barry Primus (*Paul Wilson*).

Technicolor. Certificate A. 162 minutes.

Cut by ten minutes before its initial press screenings, and by another fifteen before its London opening, Scorsese's marvellous musical has now been restored to its full 163 minutes. Resulting not exactly in a new movie, but one which has regained its proper rhythm, including the wayward longeurs that perversely assert themselves as being among its major pleasures.

Taking its cue from the Big Band era and its plot from all those Hollywood musicals in which the Glenn Miller, Benny Goodman or Tommy Dorsey band played while the juveniles aspired, romanced, agonised and finally made the grade, *New York, New York* looks at first glance like a tolerably successful pastiche. On reflection, one realises that Scorsese has in fact inverted (subverted?) the basic premises of the musical.

The protracted opening sequence (after a brief evocation of the V-J Day celebrations in Times Square), for instance, is entirely concerned with Jimmy Doyle's tortuously ingenious attempts, after seeing his pick-up routine rejected by two other girls, to deny Francine the privilege of saying no. Linguistically and dramatically speaking, it should outstay its welcome; but the peculiar pleasure of the sequence is that, being structured musically in a sort of rondo form (theme, variation, return), it assumes the role that would normally be played by a ballad in stating the hero's initial attraction to (developing during the stanzas to a yearning for) the heroine.

Immediately following this sequence, there is what might be a charming homage to *On the Town* as Jimmy pauses on an outside staircase to watch a sailor and his girl dance in the empty yard below. Conceived in essentially naturalistic terms (it is very brief, impromptu rather than formally choreographed, and performed to the rattle of the unseen elevated overhead instead of to music), it nevertheless emerges as a 'number' performed (or conjured) by Jimmy himself to express his sudden awareness of how much this girl he has picked up already means to him.

Several other dramatic (i.e. non-musical) scenes emerge, in an analogous sense, as musical numbers, formally choreographed rather than dramatically staged. Most notably the one at the mournfully deserted railway station where Jimmy tries to telephone Francine on his way to join her in North Carolina, and finds the train steaming away without him; or the runaway marriage, with the elderly J.P. and his resentful wife, routed out of bed in the middle of the night, waiting sleepily while the lovers indulge in last-minute doubts. Both scenes, though perfectly apposite in terms of plot, serve less to advance the film dramatically than (again like musical numbers) to create an undertow of feeling, in this case a mood of fragile, tender regret. In consciously quoting the Hollywood musical, these scenes have a little fun with its clichés, but the effect, rather than comic, is strangely moving: as though these hapless misquotations acknowledged that a whole celluloid world of simplicity and security could never be recaptured.

Contrariwise, the musical numbers in the film are used to carry its entire burden of plot, characterisation and conflict. Almost invariably seen fragmented in rehearsal, or as snatches of performance staged without the usual production values or choreographic embellishments (Liza Minnelli singing straight to mike, De Niro taking a solo on the band platform), they are neither elaborate enough nor inventive enough to claim status as 'numbers'. Their function is rather to elucidate the character tensions between the protagonists (mainly stemming from their different ideals of music), and to chart their inevitable progress to marital breakdown.

Tom Milne



Liza Minnelli and Robert De Niro in 'New York, New York'



David Lean (right) and Freddie Young during the filming of 'Ryan's Daughter'

DAVID LEAN: THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

David Lean's current reputation in the more (and even some of the less) academic film circles is unenviable to say the least. His work has suffered from several trends in both film-making and film criticism over the last couple of decades (which may partially explain why he has been unable to complete any movie projects in the last twelve years). Lean is merely credited—and more often discredited—with such qualities as 'good taste', 'middlebrowism', 'intelligence' and 'technical competence'. The fame and immense commercial success that several of his films have enjoyed is considered to be proof that there can be nothing of interest in them.

All this makes it very difficult for the pro-Lean writer to avoid a highly defensive tone. The unity and vehemence of the attack on the director can easily lead one to an attempt to 'redeem' him. Remarkably little has been published on Lean's output which simply works from the standpoint that it achieves the same artistic complexity and richness as that by, say, Renoir, Hitchcock and the rest of the directors in the auteurs' canons. Indeed, auteurism is usually the stumbling block regarding Lean; he is frequently found to be totally lacking a personal style. It seems to me, however, that Lean's body of work presents a coherent, consistent view of the world, and that the mode of presentation has many distinctive features. Andrew Sarris claimed that *Doctor Zhivago* was 'a work of impeccable impersonality'; whilst I do not feel that the film is amongst Lean's finest (its muddled narrative and largely unsuitable cast make much of it dramatically ineffective), it seems to be almost *too* personal, the director being the cinematic equivalent of his eponymous hero, a poet so wrapped up in his subjective, Romantic view of the world that he pays little attention to social and political upheavals.

Born in Croydon in 1908, Lean has made relatively few films since Noël Coward took him on (from his job as editor of various feature films) as co-director of his war picture *In Which We Serve* in 1942. Lean then became the sole director of two more Coward productions, *This Happy Breed* (1944) and *Blithe Spirit* (1945), both in colour (especially unusual for British films of the time). The association with Coward culminated in the superb *Brief Encounter* (1945), which might be

identified as the first "authentic" Lean movie. Two Dickens adaptations—*Great Expectations* (1946) and *Oliver Twist* (1948)—enhanced Lean's critical reputation at the time they were released, these being followed by three very different films starring Ann Todd (whom Lean married in 1949): *The Passionate Friends* (1949), *Madeleine* (1950), an ambiguous tale, based on fact, of a girl accused of murdering her lover in a repressive Victorian Glasgow, and *The Sound Barrier* (1952), a study of a fanatical aircraft manufacturer. Another literary adaptation, *Hobson's Choice*, came in 1954, followed by Lean's first venture into international film production, *Summer Madness* (1955). Lean's last four, and most famous, movies are his 'blockbusters', *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957), *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), *Doctor Zhivago* (1965) and *Ryan's Daughter* (1970), each of which is in many ways (most obviously, their running times) the equivalent of two, or even three, films by most other directors. The final three were made in collaboration with writer Robert Bolt, who has been working with Lean on the ill-fated *Mutiny on The Bounty* project over the past few years.

Lean's cinema has often been characterised as 'bourgeois', and indeed if that term is defined by such qualities as 'individualism' and 'subjectivism' (as it often is), then it seems an accurate description of Lean's ideology. He is concerned to present the world through the eyes of his heroes and heroines, so that we understand their hopes, joys, fears, pains, ambitions, etc. This is important because of the nature of his protagonists; they are romantics, fanatics, perfectionists, fantasists, constantly dreaming of, and searching for, happiness through an escape from their environment, whether this be dull middle-class conformity (as in *Brief Encounter*, *The Passionate Friends*, *Madeleine*, etc.), a Japanese P.O.W. camp in Burma (*Kwai*), a turbulent Russia (*Zhivago*), or wherever. Their means of achieving the escape is usually through a love affair and/or artistic creation (in *Zhivago*, for example, the hero escapes it through his poetry and love for Lara). However, they tend to experience contradictory emotions, being torn between their Romantic aspirations and the feeling that they should accept the rational, secure life against which they are rebelling (a dilemma symbolised by the bridges on which many of the protagonists stand, as

Arts LAB

C I N E M A



JULY

Thu.	1	CUTTER'S WAY (X)	6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Fri.	2	THE CALIFORNIA DOLLS (X) CUTTER'S WAY (X)	3.00 & 11.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Sat.	3	THE CALIFORNIA DOLLS (X) CUTTER'S WAY (X)	3.00 & 11.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Sun.	4	Latin Hero: MEAN STREETS (X) CUTTER'S WAY (X)	3.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Mon.	5	CUTTER'S WAY (X)	6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Tue.	6	CUTTER'S WAY (X)	2.30, 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Wed.	7	THE TIME BANDITS (A) Retrospective: DETOUR & D.O.A. (AA)	3.00 p.m. 7.30 p.m.
Thu.	8	BLOOD WEDDING (U) & Short	6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Fri.	9	THE TIME BANDITS (A) BLOOD WEDDING (U) & Short	3.00 & 11.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Sat.	10	THE TIME BANDITS (A) BLOOD WEDDING (U) & Short	3.00 & 11.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Sun.	11	Latin Hero: FINGERS (X) BLOOD WEDDING (U) & Short	3.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Mon.	12	BLOOD WEDDING (U) & Short	6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Tue.	13	BLOOD WEDDING (U) & Short	2.30, 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Wed.	14	WOLFEN (X) & THE AWAKENING (X) Retrospective: I LIVE IN FEAR (A)	2.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Thu.	15	VICTOR/VICTORIA (AA)	6.00 & 8.30 p.m.
Fri.	16	WOLFEN (X) & THE AWAKENING (X) VICTOR/VICTORIA (AA)	2.00 & 11.00 p.m. 6.00 & 8.30 p.m.
Sat.	17	WOLFEN (X) & THE AWAKENING (X) VICTOR/VICTORIA (AA)	2.00 & 11.00 p.m. 6.00 & 8.30 p.m.
Sun.	18	Latin Hero: GLORIA (AA) VICTOR/VICTORIA (AA)	3.00 p.m. 6.00 & 8.30 p.m.
Mon.	19	VICTOR/VICTORIA (AA)	6.00 & 8.30 p.m.
Tue.	20	VICTOR/VICTORIA (AA)	2.30, 6.00 & 8.30 p.m.
Wed.	21	BODY HEAT (X) THE END OF AUGUST (A) & THE EUROPEANS (U)	3.00 p.m. 7.00 p.m.
Thu.	22	THE END OF AUGUST (A) & THE EUROPEANS (U)	7.00 p.m.
Fri.	23	BODY HEAT (X) THE END OF AUGUST (A) & THE EUROPEANS (U)	3.00 & 11.00 p.m. 7.00 p.m.

Sat.	24	BODY HEAT (X) THE MARRIAGE OF MARIA BRAUN (AA)	3.00 & 11.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Sun.	25	Latin Hero: BLOODBROTHERS (X) & THE LORDS OF FLATBUSH (AA) THE MARRIAGE OF MARIA BRAUN (AA)	2.30 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.

CINEMA CLOSED FOR REPAIRS FROM MONDAY 26 JULY UNTIL FRIDAY 13 AUGUST INCLUSIVE. WE RE-OPEN ON SATURDAY 14 AUGUST.

AUGUST

Sat.	14	Latin Hero: THE GODFATHER (X) NEW YORK, NEW YORK (A)	3.00 & 11.00 p.m. 7.30 p.m.
Sun.	15	Latin Hero: SERPICO (X) NEW YORK, NEW YORK (A)	3.00 p.m. 7.30 p.m.
Mon.	16	NEW YORK, NEW YORK (A)	7.30 p.m.
Tue.	17	NEW YORK, NEW YORK, (A) Lean: BRIEF ENCOUNTER (A) & DAVID LEAN—A SELF PORTRAIT (U)	2.30 p.m. 7.30 p.m.
Wed.	18	Latin Hero: SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER (X) Latin Hero: DOG DAY AFTERNOON (X)	3.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Thu.	19	LILI MARLEEN (AA)	6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Fri.	20	Latin Hero: SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER (X) LILI MARLEEN (AA)	3.00 & 11.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Sat.	21	Latin Hero: SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER (X) LILI MARLEEN (AA)	3.00 & 11.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Sun.	22	Oates: THE WILD BUNCH (X) Latin Hero: PRINCE OF THE CITY (X)	3.00 p.m. 7.30 p.m.
Mon.	23	Latin Hero: PRINCE OF THE CITY (X)	7.30 p.m.
Tue.	24	Latin Hero: PRINCE OF THE CITY (X)	2.30 & 7.30 p.m.
Wed.	25	SHARKY'S MACHINE (X) Lean: OLIVER TWIST (U)	3.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Thu.	26	GALLIPOLI (A)	6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Fri.	27	SHARKY'S MACHINE (X) GALLIPOLI (A)	3.00 & 11.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Sat.	28	SHARKY'S MACHINE (X) GALLIPOLI (A)	3.00 & 11.00 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.
Sun.	29	Lean: SUMMERTIME (A) & HOBSON'S CHOICE (U) GALLIPOLI (A)	2.30 p.m. 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.

C A L E N D A R



Mon. 30 GALLIPOLI (A) 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.

Tue. 31 GALLIPOLI (A) 2.30, 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.

SEPTEMBER

Wed. 1 ANY WHICH WAY YOU CAN (AA) & EVERY WHICH WAY BUT LOOSE (AA) 2.00 p.m.
Oates: TWO LANE BLACKTOP (X) & THE HIRED HAND (AA) 7.00 p.m.

Thu. 2 Miller: THE INQUISITOR (AA) & LES MISTONS (A) 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.

Fri. 3 ANY WHICH WAY YOU CAN (AA) & EVERY WHICH WAY BUT LOOSE (AA) 2.00 & 11.00 p.m.
Miller: THE INQUISITOR (AA) & LES MISTONS (A) 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.

Sat. 4 ANY WHICH WAY YOU CAN (AA) & EVERY WHICH WAY BUT LOOSE (AA) 2.00 & 11.00 p.m.
Miller: THE INQUISITOR (AA) & LES MISTONS (A) 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.

Sun. 5 Oates: DILLINGER (X) & THE THIEF WHO CAME TO DINNER (A) 2.30 p.m.
Miller: THE INQUISITOR (AA) & LES MISTONS (A) 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.

Mon. 6 Miller: THE INQUISITOR (AA) & LES MISTONS (A) 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.

Tue. 7 Miller: THE INQUISITOR (AA) & LES MISTONS (A) 2.30, 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.

Wed. 8 RAGTIME (X) 2.30 p.m.
Miller: THIS SWEET SICKNESS (X) & THE BEST WAY TO WALK (X) 7.00 p.m.

Thu. 9 GUYS AND DOLLS (A) 5.30 & 8.15 p.m.

Fri. 10 RAGTIME (X) 2.30 & 11.00 p.m.
GUYS AND DOLLS (A) 5.30 & 8.15 p.m.

Sat. 11 RAGTIME (X) 2.30 & 11.00 p.m.
GUYS AND DOLLS (A) 5.30 & 8.15 p.m.

Sun. 12 Lean: THE PASSIONATE FRIENDS (A) 3.00 p.m.
GUYS AND DOLLS (A) 5.30 & 8.15 p.m.

Mon. 13 GUYS AND DOLLS (A) 5.30 & 8.15 p.m.

Tue. 14 GUYS AND DOLLS (A) 2.30, 5.30 & 8.15 p.m.

Wed. 15 KRAMER V. KRAMER (A) & THE COMPETITION (A) 2.00 p.m.
Oates: BRING ME THE HEAD OF ALFREDO GARCIA (X) & GUNS IN THE AFTERNOON (A) 7.00 p.m.

Thu. 16 LOLA (AA) 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.

Fri. 17 KRAMER V. KRAMER (A) & THE COMPETITION (A) 2.00 & 11.00 p.m.
LOLA (AA) 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.

Sat. 18 KRAMER V. KRAMER (A) & THE COMPETITION (A) 2.00 & 11.00 p.m.
LOLA (AA) 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.

Sun. 19 KRAMER V. KRAMER (A) & THE COMPETITION (A) 2.00 p.m.
LOLA (AA) 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.

Mon. 20 LOLA (AA) 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.

Tue. 21 LOLA (AA) 2.30, 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.

Wed. 22 BLOW OUT (X) & TAXI DRIVER (X) 2.00 p.m.
Oates: COCKFIGHTER (Club) & BADLANDS (Club) 7.00 p.m.

Thu. 23 LA RONDE (A) 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.

Fri. 24 BLOW OUT (X) & TAXI DRIVER (X) 2.00 & 11.00 p.m.
LA RONDE (A) 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.

Sat. 25 BLOW OUT (X) & TAXI DRIVER (X) 2.00 & 11.00 p.m.
LA RONDE (A) 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.

Sun. 26 Lean: THE BRIDGE ON THE RIVER KWAI (U) 3.00 p.m.
LA RONDE (A) 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.

Mon. 27 LA RONDE (A) 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.

Tue. 28 LA RONDE (A) 2.30, 6.15 & 8.30 p.m.

Wed. 29 ABSENCE OF MALICE (A) 3.00 p.m.
Lean: LAWRENCE OF ARABIA (A) 6.30 p.m.

Thu. 30 FITZCARRALDO (A) 5.15 & 8.00 p.m.

OCTOBER

Fri. 1 ABSENCE OF MALICE (A) 3.00 & 11.00 p.m.
FITZCARRALDO (A) 5.15 & 8.00 p.m.

Sat. 2 ABSENCE OF MALICE (A) 3.00 & 11.00 p.m.
FITZCARRALDO (A) 5.15 & 8.00 p.m.

Sun. 3 Latin Hero: PARADISE ALLEY (A) 3.00 p.m.
FITZCARRALDO (A) 5.15 & 8.00 p.m.

Mon. 4 FITZCARRALDO (A) 5.15 & 8.00 p.m.

Tue. 5 FITZCARRALDO (A) 2.30, 5.15 & 8.00 p.m.

Wed. 6 THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH (X) 3.00 p.m.
Lean: RYAN'S DAUGHTER (A) 7.00 p.m.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

All screenings will be held in the Arts Lab Cinema.
With double-bill programmes the main film (listed first) will be screened after the support (listed second).
Club performances are only open to members and their guests. All other performances are open to the public.

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in, for example, *Brief Encounter*, *Summer Madness*, *Kwai*). Unable to resolve their dilemma one way or the other, they often choose suicide as an escape from it, and, though they are not always successful in their attempt at self-destruction, their ultimate fate (a return to their initial situation) can be a form of 'living death'. Sometimes, however, a balance appears to be struck between the opposing forces, and this leads to the happiest ending (e.g. *The Passionate Friends*), though they still tend to be ambiguous—as indeed almost all the endings of Lean films are in one way or another (perhaps this indicates bourgeois mysticism!) Lean certainly asks us to empathise with his protagonists, but not to the extent that we are totally uncritical of their individualism and romanticism; these aspirations often lead to disaster for other people (most notably in *Kwai*) as well as themselves.

Lean's emphasis on subjectivity frequently results in extensive use of flashbacks, which also imbue his films with a fatalistic, circular quality (not unlike that in Max Ophüls's work), particularly when combined with the symbolic use of trains, which appear in many Lean pictures (often at the beginning and end, as in *Summer Madness* and *Kwai*). The outcome tends to be decided and irrevocable before we experience the narrative, which tells us how it came about. At the end of *Lawrence of Arabia*, Lawrence returns 'home' to Britain (for the central irony of the film is that he is not 'of Arabia' at all) where, as we saw at the beginning, he will meet his death in a road accident (ignoring 'Danger' signs just before it). The road we see at the start is the end of the road Lawrence travels along as the film finishes. His story is inescapably trapped between these two scenes. Thus, past and present are inseparable in Lean's world, their inter-relation often being emphasised. In both *Oliver Twist* and *Doctor Zhivago* a flashback reveals information about identity—the past has to be penetrated to discover the truth about the present. In the latter instance, it allows the film to end on a note of hope with the discovery that the mystical 'gift' has been passed on from the old generation to the new. (Lean's use of 'gifts' of one kind or another is always interesting, though usually more ironic—the priest's parting gifts, one of 'doubt', to Rosy and Charles in *Ryan's Daughter*, or the heroine ashamedly purchasing an expensive clock for her husband in *Brief Encounter*, symbolically buying him the 'time' she cannot have with her lover). In *The Sound Barrier* the inseparability of past, present and future is constantly stressed, referred to at one point as 'the process of continuous creation'.

Good and evil, beauty and harshness are apparent dichotomies which are also inseparable in Lean's world—because they are all 'in the eye of the beholder'. The vision of designing a supersonic aircraft in *The Sound Barrier*, at the expense of human lives, is labelled both 'evil' and 'good' by different characters. The icy wastes of *Zhivago* and the desert in *Lawrence* are spectacularly beautiful to the heroes of these films (and therefore to us), but they are also powerful natural forces which almost kill them—this is characteristic of Lean's view of Nature at its most complex. People themselves may embody both qualities, too; the elder doctor tells *Zhivago*, 'Pretty creatures do ugly things to people'—and 'ugly' creatures, like Michael in *Ryan's Daughter*, can become 'pretty', as he does for Rosy, overcoming her initial repulsion at the end of the film. Mobs of people are usually evil in Lean's films (consistent with his individualism), but even this is not always the case; in *Ryan's Daughter* again, the villagers form a vicious mob to attack Rosy and her husband, but they also band together for 'positive' (if still morally dubious) action in rescuing the arms shipment during the storm. Some Lean protagonists have an ironic self-awareness, realising that they too are part of the 'mob'; in *Summer Madness*, for example, the heroine expresses relief that she is not in a hotel full of tourists—'like me', she adds.

The more precise stylistic features of Lean's work can only be usefully discussed within analyses of individual films. Here I have attempted to define some of the major concerns of it, and suggest the complexity and 'personal style' with which he develops these thematic concerns. Above all, it might be said that Lean's achievement has been to convey with extraordinary depth and power the complex emotional and psychological states of a variety of characters in vastly different environments, but who tend to share the same inner conflicts, between fear and desire, repression and passion, rationality and irrationality. It is this, more than anything else, which probably explains the immense box-office success of many of his films.

Jonathan Sanders



BRIEF ENCOUNTER

(August 17)

Director: David Lean.

Great Britain, 1945.

Script: Noël Coward, David Lean, Anthony Havelock-Allen. Based on the play by Noël Coward. Photography: Robert Krasker.

Music: Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Concerto.

Leading Players: Celia Johnson (*Laura Jesson*), Trevor Howard (*Alex Harvey*), Cyril Raymond (*Fred Jesson*), Stanley Holloway (*Albert Godby*), Joyce Carey (*Myrtle Bagot*), Everley Gregg (*Dolly Messiter*).

Black and white. Certificate A. 86 minutes.

Brief Encounter is still one of Lean's best-known films, though not necessarily for the best reasons. In the permissive society which has supposedly evolved since it was made, it has become increasingly difficult for many people to take seriously its story of a middle-class extra-marital affair which founders on the rocks of guilt and humiliation. Much of the problem, however, is often that the film is believed to be upholding the very values it criticises, or at least questions; or, conversely, it may be that audiences are still not prepared to accept its serious treatment of emotional issues and profound interrogation of

the value of social conformity, particularly marriage.

The film is the first major example of Lean's subjective technique, and still, perhaps, the finest. The opening sequence presents the parting of the lovers objectively (we do not even know what is happening), but this is followed by a gradual absorption into Laura's viewpoint (the background to a close-up of her fades away, internal monologue replaces 'real' sound), her flashbacks to events of the past few weeks climaxing in an intensely subjective presentation of the opening scene, Lean making electrifying use of montage and a slowly tilting camera in her suicide attempt. Narrative structure and viewpoint make the outcome inevitable (emphasising the strength of fate, which also brings together the future lovers on three occasions), shifting the emphasis from *whether* Laura and Alec will part to her frustrations and the moral/social codes which enforce the separation. But it is more complex than that: Laura is prone to fantasise, like many Lean characters, but these fantasies must always be personal creations; thus, the films she goes to see (with titles like 'Love in the Mist' and 'Flames of Passion'—which certainly make ironic commentaries on the narrative) always disappoint her, and she prefers to imagine herself in various conventionally romantic situations with Alec when she is looking through the train window (her recollection, 'I gave up my ticket', when she leaves

the station, reminds us of the earlier discussion of cinema tickets, stressing the link). Indeed all the events she remembers in a dream-like state, watching herself (initially) on the 'screen' in her mind which gradually replaces the image of her husband and home, may be products of her romantic imagination. 'Romance . . . fits with delirium', as her husband Fred says 'of his crossword puzzle, fantasy being the only way in which this repressive society allows romance to occur.

The critique of the society is made primarily through three characters. Fred is the least repulsive of the three, but he displays little of the 'wisdom' with which Laura credits him, being monotonous (with his crosswords) at best, and at his worst he is insensitive to his wife's needs ('Hurry up with all this beautifying—I want my dinner.'). Dolly, like Fred, may mean well, but that does not really make her any better ('Isn't it awful about people meaning to be kind?' Laura reflects); the 'gossiping acquaintance' of Laura, rather than the 'wise, kind friend' she wanted, she (Dolly) represents the triviality of middle-class society, whereas Alec's 'friend' Stephen represents the repressive nature of its morality. Sometimes the characters' statements indicate a desire to break through these repressions—Laura, for a moment, wishes Dolly were dead, but more usually these statements are in joke form (Fred suggests they lock the children up, thrash them and go to the pictures by themselves!). Laura is constantly torn between emotional reticence, the desire for 'decency' and 'self-respect', and her Romantic aspirations, just as Alec, as a doctor, is concerned with 'common sense', but as a lover he admits to Laura later that 'it's too late to be as sensible as all that' (and even doctors, he tells her, must have their 'private dreams'). Laura's imagination causes her to exaggerate her sense of moral codes and therefore creates the guilt inside her which, for instance, makes her feel like a criminal just because a policeman approaches her. Emotionally, she is almost schizophrenic (visually suggested in the scenes where she is shown with her reflection, in the train window, or in the mirror as she lies to her husband). Her narration must be viewed with both irony and sympathy. Eventually society's codes triumph; Laura and Alec put on a final 'act' for Dolly (Laura comments, 'Nobody could have guessed what he was really feeling'), sinking back into emotional reticence and their respective marriages.

Some other important elements of *Brief Encounter*. Lean's symbolic use of trains, the slow 'stoppers' which return the lovers to their families and the express trains which hurtle through the station (Lean cuts to one as Laura and Alec kiss, implying the sexual dimension in their relationship which is so difficult to convey). An express train brings them together for the first time, through the piece of grit in Laura's eye (an intriguing symbol itself, offering many possibilities) which he removes, and one almost ends Laura's life, suggesting that excessive romanticism can lead to self-destruction. Lean's concern with Nature really begins in this film, though it will become more complex in later ones; here it is basically a refuge for the lovers from man's conventions and taboos. Yet when they are boating on the river they are halted by a bridge (though Alec's resulting fall into the water leads to his declaration of love), and when they drive to the 'real country' they can only stand on one of man's bridges. The sun is seen as a positive force (it makes people less shy and difficult, Laura reflects), yet in order to kiss the lovers have to hide furtively in the darkest parts of the railway station. Time is important in the film, particularly the transience ('Nothing lasts...neither happiness nor despair...not even life...') symbolised above all by the tea-room where Laura and Alec wait for their trains. He declares that they still have a few more minutes before he leaves her forever, but Dolly enters immediately after he has said this, fate having ensured there is 'no time at all', as he remarks earlier in the film. The jocular but more openly sexual relationship in the tea-room between the waitress and station guard is another important element, providing ironic contrast and parallel to the relationship between Laura and Alec. And, of course, there is Rachmaninoff's Second Piano Concerto, stimulating Laura's romantic dreams and memories (she chooses it in preference to other programmes on the radio) but which her husband turns down. It is still playing towards the end when Lean makes that superbly ambiguous cut through time and space (a device repeated and embellished 25 years later in *Ryan's Daughter*) from Laura in the tea-room after her

suicide attempt, to her face as she sits at home at the end of her 'dream'; past and present, reality and fantasy suddenly merge into one.

Jonathan Sanders

OLIVER TWIST

(August 25)

Director: David Lean.

Great Britain, 1948.

Script: David Lean, Stanley Haynes. Based on the novel by Charles Dickens.

Photography: Guy Green.

Music: Sir Arnold Bax.

Leading Players: Robert Newton (*Bill Sikes*), Alec Guinness (*Fagin*), Kay Walsh (*Nancy*), John Howard Davies (*Oliver Twist*), Francis L. Sullivan (*Mr. Bumble*), Mary Clare (*Mrs. Corney*). Black and white. Certificate U. 116 minutes.

Oliver Twist, Lean's second Dickens adaptation, followed the success of *Great Expectations* (1946) and developed the subjective style of both that film and *Brief Encounter*. Whilst it is primarily Oliver's viewpoint that we are given—note, for instance, the startling use of subjective camera in the chase sequence which ends with a fist in Oliver's, and our, face—it is not exclusively so. Like Jean Renoir, Lean usually rejects conventional hero/villain structures, and the application of his subjective technique to nominal villains such as Fagin and Bill Sikes allows us to at least understand their motives and fears, even if it does not make them totally sympathetic. Indeed, Fagin almost becomes the authentic Lean hero of *Oliver Twist* through Alec Guinness's often warm and humorous performance, far from the vicious anti-semitic caricature of which the film was accused at the time, particularly in America, where it was heavily cut for this reason and even then hardly shown. The character is not softened to the extent of Ron Moody's Fagin in the musical remake *Oliver!*, but he shows considerable tenderness towards Oliver and his apparent avarice actually takes the form of a search for beauty in a dark, grimy world; his collection of 'pretty things' represents this at least as much as his criminality. Fagin may be physically ugly, but, as so often with Lean, we must not draw conclusions from surface appearances (conversely, in *Great Expectations* Pip finds Estella both 'pretty' and 'insulting').

If individuals are unlikely to be outright villains in Lean's world, crowds of people can be, for they easily turn into mobs, as they do in the climactic sequence of *Oliver Twist*. Fagin shouts defiantly at them, 'What right have you to butcher me?' and indeed the same would apply to Bill Sikes; the mob's sickening cheer as he accidentally hangs himself make them no less brutal than he is (the moment recalls Pip's disgust at the crowds who cheer at the public executions in *Great Expectations*). This is part of the critique of Victorian society contained in the film (and, of course, Dickens's novel); even the benevolence of Oliver's grandfather (and thus, perhaps, the happy ending) is undercut when he shouts to the seething mob, 'Fifty pounds for the man who rescues the boy', relating him to the various nefarious bribes paid by other characters in the film (Lean stresses the avarice of the whole society by close-ups of the coins at such moments). In the workhouse sequence, especially, Lean's editing provides ironic juxtapositions which expose the hypocrisy and injustice in Victorian society. These may not be very subtle, but they are in keeping with the boldly melodramatic, almost expressionist, stylisation of the whole film (particularly unusual in 1940s British cinema).

Oliver's search for happiness—like Pip's in *Great Expectations*—takes the visual form of a journey from darkness into light. His birth takes place in the context of a dark, powerful Nature, the opening storm sequence, devised especially for the film, being one of Lean's finest. (There is no proper speech until about six minutes into the film, when the first clear words—ironically—are, 'It's all over'.) Oliver immediately becomes trapped in the gloomy world of the workhouse and, later, the undertaker's, but he escapes to London, which seems to promise a brighter future (there is light in the sky as he walks there). However, this proves to be an equally dark world, where the shadows hide crime (Sikes tries to shut out the daylight from the room where he has

murdered Nancy). Even those who live in the shadows can be afraid of them, as the Dodger shows when he cries out to Fagin, who is taking the candle, 'Don't leave us in the dark'. In contrast to this world is that of Oliver's grandfather, which is filled with light (significantly, Oliver is named 'White' for a time after he has been removed from the dark criminal world). However, when he reaches the safety of this for the first time and is lying in bed, a shadow covers half his face, symbolising that he has not escaped from the dark, dangerous world permanently. Oliver's journey to the unequivocal light of the final scene (it is one of Lean's most optimistic endings, implying—unlike *Brief Encounter*—that in this case the safety of middle-class conformism outweighs its dullness) is a long one, but, one hastens to add, the film is so overpoweringly atmospheric and cinematic, such a model of narrative economy and fluency, that the journey never seems a long one to the viewer.

Jonathan Sanders

HOBSON'S CHOICE

(August 29)

Director: David Lean.

Great Britain, 1953.

Script: David Lean, Norman Spencer, Wynyard Browne. Based on the play by Harold Brighouse.

Photography: Jack Hildyard.

Music: Malcolm Arnold.

Leading Players: Charles Laughton (*Henry Hobson*), John Mills (*Willie Mossop*), Brenda de Banzie (*Maggie Hobson*), Daphne Anderson (*Alice Hobson*), Prunella Scales (*Vicky Hobson*), Richard Wattis (*Albert Prosser*).

Black and white. Certificate U. 107 minutes.

David Lean's funniest film is *The Bridge on the River Kwai*. This is no reflection on that film's real achievement as a black comedy about military attitudes and values, but it does reinforce the view that the conjunction between Lean and humour must seem an odd one. For this reason, *Hobson's Choice* has considerable novelty value, a serious director skilfully flexing his muscles in unusually humorous terrain, but also lightheartedly examining themes he has treated tragically elsewhere, most notably the cruelty of Victorian society and the romantic yearnings of a thwarted yet determined heroine. The British Academy voted it the best British film of 1954.

The phrase 'Hobson's choice' is not alluded to overtly, but its meaning—no alternative—skilfully underpins the whole structure. There are three such 'choices' in the film: Maggie Hobson's decision to marry, which is her only route out of the tyranny of her domestic situation; Will Mossop's 'choice' to marry Maggie, when in fact her obstinacy makes escape impossible for him; and Hobson's 'choice' to go into partnership with his son-in-law when in fact his health and situation leave him no option. The film's achievement is to inform the characterisation with such affection (as does Harold Brighouse's original play) that these 'choices' come to seem not only inevitable but fortuitous.

Charles Laughton's performance as Hobson is superb, particularly in the famous scene in which, staggering out of the Moonrakers pub in an alcoholic stupor, he becomes mesmerised by the reflection of the moon in a gleaming Mancunian puddle. But even finer in some ways—because the part is so integral to Lean's interpretation of the material—is Brenda de Banzie's Maggie. The character's wish for freedom is rendered in terms that are quite bold for that society in that she proposes to the man and she marries beneath her. Typically for a Victorian heroine, her only means of independence is the securing of an astute marriage and moulding her man into an image of her ambition. "I don't know what came over me," says Will after standing up to Maggie's father, to which Maggie retorts: "I came over you".

Part of the entertainment comes from the reversal of images which occurs when Maggie switches allegiance from her father to Will. Will comes out of his hole (of meek subservience) just as Hobson falls into his (of drunken self-pity). Hobson's world lurches increasingly towards nightmare, realised in a very powerful delirium tremens scene, whereas Will's takes on the character of what he terms a "happy dream".

There are many such dreamers in Lean's world, from Laura in *Brief Encounter*, through T. E.

to Rosie Ryan in *Ryan's Daughter*, but the split for them between realist routine and romantic imagination is often tragic. The significance of *Hobson's Choice* in this scheme is that, for once in Lean, dreams come true. Like so many of the characters who particularly interest this director, Maggie Hobson is a surrogate Romantic (compare her early dismissal of courtship as "all glitter" with her later keepsake of the flower in her Bible, or the way her brass wedding ring becomes first an emblem of her severe practicality and later one of her sentimentality). She is granted the fulfilment that similar characters in Lean are invariably denied.

Hobson's Choice is not an untypical work, then, but offers familiar themes as seen from a more genial perspective. The cheerful tone is unerringly set by the film's marvellous opening, an elaborate atmospheric reprise of the Victorian menace of his Dickens adaptations and *Madeleine* which Lean recreates only in order to deflate, when the dark shadow of Hobson appears at the doorway, wobbles drunkenly and then emits a loud emphatic belch.

Neil Sinyard

SUMMER MADNESS (Summertime)

(August 29)

Director: David Lean.
Great Britain/U.S.A., 1955.
Script: David Lean, H.E. Bates. Based on the play "The Time of the Cuckoo" by Arthur Laurents.
Photography: Jack Hildyard.
Music: Alessandro Cicognini.
Leading Players: Katharine Hepburn (*Jane Hudson*), Rossano Brazzi (*Renato de Rossi*), Darren McGavin (*Eddie Yaeger*), Isa Miranda (*Signora Fiorini*).
Colour. Certificate A. 100 minutes.

Summer Madness forms a fascinating bridge—to use a characteristic Lean image—between the early films (with its essentially small-scale, bitter-sweet account of another brief encounter) and the later 'blockbusters' (location shooting is carried to a greater extent than ever before, it is the first non-Coward film in colour). It is amongst the most visually beautiful, and the most melancholy, of Lean's works; it is also, perhaps, one of his most personal (Lean has named it as his favourite), stressing the artifice and limitations of film in the area of emotional experience so central to his world. Jane Hudson, a middle-aged American spinster, arrives in Venice, intending to capture all its romantic charms with a ciné camera. When she begins to film something, Lean cuts to it, reproducing for us the shot she is making (a further development of his subjective technique). Like other Lean heroines, she is personally creating a romantic fantasy—as is Lean himself—but in this case it is a two-dimensional one which does not involve anyone she knows; it emphasises her isolation, as she observes lovers and unintentionally films a pick-up (embarrassment resulting). She uses the camera, like the dark sunglasses, to retreat into self-repressing ultra-independence (from which Mary Justin suffered in *The Passionate Friends*). The beginning of her emotional involvement with Renato is signalled when she puts down her camera (a close-up of this) to look at the red goblet in his shop, where she almost leaves her glasses. Jane's accidental fall into the canal (reminiscent of Alec's fall into water in *Brief Encounter*, especially in its consequence), her urchin friend catching her camera before she goes in, results in Renato's visit to her and declaration of love. For the remainder of her stay in Venice, Renato and direct emotional (plus sexual) experience replace the camera and glasses.

Lean makes bold use of both symbolism and colour in *Summer Madness*; the use of fireworks as sexual images, though not particularly original, makes other instances of it (e.g. Hitchcock's in the same year's *To Catch a Thief*) seem feeble by comparison. But more interesting are such symbols as the red goblet and white gardenias (the first of which Jane accidentally drops from a bridge and Renato fails to recover from the canal), because they do not have 'fixed', but subjective and ambiguous, meanings. When Renato fails to catch up with the train (fatalistically removing Jane from her 'City of Romance', as one brought her to it) to deliver the second gardenia, it is

clearly a tragedy, but only because of what the gardenia means to her. If it represents the fulfilment of schoolgirl dreams (she remembers wanting to wear one at her first ball, but the boy she was going with could not afford to buy her one), this final sequence becomes almost a microcosm of the whole film; Renato can only show her the sexual love she has been searching for, as he can only show her the gardenia as the train carries her away—he cannot give either to her permanently (the only present she can take back with her is the pen, perhaps symbolic of her career as a 'fancy secretary', given to her by the urchin, her other male friend in Venice). And indeed Lean has only been able to show us Venice and emotional experience (though the film may artificially make us 'feel' them) through his cameras; like Jane Hudson when she returns to America, all we have is a film. But in our case, at least, it is a wonderful film, Katharine Hepburn's tragi-comic personality of brashness and fluster providing many of its wonders. Above all, and perhaps more than any other Lean film (even the 'epics'), it is a film to be experienced and enjoyed; as Renato tells Jane, 'The most beautiful things in life are those we do not understand.'

Jonathan Sanders

THE PASSIONATE FRIENDS

(September 12)

Director: David Lean.
Great Britain, 1948.
Script: Eric Ambler. Based on the novel by H.G. Wells.
Photography: Guy Green.
Music: Richard Addinsell.
Leading Players: Ann Todd (*Mary*), Claude Rains (*Howard Justin*), Trevor Howard (*Steven Stratton*), Isabel Dean (*Pat*), Betty Ann Davies (*Miss Layton*), Arthur Howard (*Manservant*).
Black and white. Certificate A. 87 minutes.

The Passionate Friends—the first and overall probably the most successful of the three films starring Ann Todd—returned Lean to many of the themes of *Brief Encounter*, which it superficially resembles in various ways. The later work fits more easily into the genre of the 'triangle drama', but it is nevertheless one of Lean's most complex films, almost to the point of schematicism. Its rather cold surface seems due in part to Ann Todd's limited emotional range, especially in comparison to Celia Johnson, but her performance in this film is not entirely unsuited to the character she plays. Mary Justin carries individualism to its logical extreme—"I want to belong to myself", she tells her lover, Stephen, who replies, "Then your life will be a failure". However, like Laura in *Brief Encounter*, she is torn between the uncontrolled romanticism she associates with her lover (who, we are told, refused to become 'respectable' when they first knew each other) and the dull conformity associated with her husband Howard (the 'cold, bloodless banker', as Stephen calls him). The film develops this opposition in various ways, such as the contrast between noise and silence. For example, the deafening noise of the New Year's Eve ball, and later of a motorboat—key moments in the narrative when Mary and Stephen meet (and have difficulty hearing each other)—contrast with the emotional reticence and quiet speaking of Howard (the superbly cast Claude Rains), who tends to apologise on the rare occasions he shouts. Mary switches on the radio, as Laura did, during the confrontation between Stephen and Howard (the soft but nervy rhythm of the music underscores the tense dialogue exchanges in the scene perfectly), but Howard—similar to Laura's husband—objects and switches it off. Other contrasts include hot/cold (Howard asks his wife if she wants ice in her drink at a particularly tense moment in the last-mentioned scene) and light/darkness (as in *Brief Encounter*, the lovers—except when they take refuge in sunlight natural surroundings—have to meet furtively in the dark; when Stephen tells her the street-lamps will be coming on, Mary says she must leave him). Most remarkable of all, perhaps, is the contrast between the natural Alpine peaks to which the lovers ascend, and the man-made subterranean world of the London Underground to which Mary descends in her attempt to commit suicide (she passes a foregrounded sign 'Way Out', perhaps 'inspired' by the 'Sortie' Moira Shearer passes

before her suicide in the previous year's *The Red Shoes*). The ending is perhaps 'happier' (or more promising, for it is still ambiguous) than that of *Brief Encounter*, for Howard, having discovered his love for Mary, is the one who prevents her suicide; a compromise between the opposing forces has been brought about.

The formal complexity of *The Passionate Friends* is due partly to its elaborate time-scheme. The whole narrative is a flashback (Mary's speech relates it in the past tense), and in the first half of the film there are not only flashbacks within this, but also flashbacks within these flashbacks! As often in Lean's work, this stresses the power of fate (which even brings the unknowing lovers to adjoining rooms at the Swiss mountain resort) and the inability to erase the past from the present. The flashbacks are part of the subjective technique again (the American title is *One Woman's Story*), and indeed Mary, like Laura, is prone to reveries in which memory often combines with fantasy (she recalls a scene in the cable-car with Stephen in the way she would have liked it to have developed, not as it did). However, as in *Oliver Twist*, Lean extends his subjective technique to other characters, particularly Howard, who—by virtue of this and Rains's excellent performance—becomes (at least for me) the film's most sympathetic character, acquiring a depth which goes far beyond the stereotype of 'the jealous husband'. As he tells Stephen, 'You're going to know my point of view', and indeed Lean gives it to us in such sequences as his observation of his wife and her lover through binoculars (this scene, and the whole characterisation of Howard, owes something to Hitchcock's *Notorious*, in which Rains plays a similar role)—when the secretary mistakes his dictation about 'financial considerations' for 'irrational considerations' (his apparently irrelevant dictations are always important clues to the character of Howard). The sequence in which he goes to the theatre (the snatch we hear from the show 'First Love' reminds one of satirical trailer for 'Flames of Passion' in *Brief Encounter*) to check whether his wife and Stephen have actually gone there themselves, and is faced with laughter and flashing light (from the stage), is one of the finest examples of Lean's externalisation of purely internal emotion.

Jonathan Sanders

THE BRIDGE ON THE RIVER KWAI

(September 26)

Director: David Lean.
Great Britain, 1957.
Script: Pierre Boulle. Based on his own novel.
Photography: Jack Hildyard.
Music: Malcolm Arnold.
Leading Players: William Holden (*Shears*), Alec Guinness (*Colonel Nicholson*), Jack Hawkins (*Major Warden*), Sessue Hayakawa (*Colonel Saito*), James Donald (*Major Crompton*), Geoffrey Horne (*Lieutenant Joyce*).
Technicolor/Scope. Certificate U. 161 minutes.

The Bridge on the River Kwai is not quite amongst Lean's finest achievements (the overlong midsection is particularly flawed), generally lacking the personal stamp of his later 'epics' made in collaboration with writer Robert Bolt, and that of his 'smaller' films since *Brief Encounter*. However, it is a key film in his career, being the first of the 'blockbusters' for which he became famous and the clearest expression of the anti-war feelings present in several of his films. It does also centralise symbolic images (the bridge, the train, the river) which run throughout most of Lean's work, and takes his concern with viewpoint to a situation where subjectivism has insane and violent consequences.

In *Kwai* each of the main characters believes that one, or even all, of the other characters is 'mad'; the film might almost be called 'Summer Madness', but here the madness is in the context of war and becomes a dangerous fanaticism. The conventional British films about World War Two are ironised and parodied to the extent that—in the climactic orgy of violence, confusion and destruction—the British are killing each other as well as the Japanese. When Colonel Nicholson is proudly nailing a plaque onto the bridge he has built, the Major Warden party, intending to blow

it up, is watching him through binoculars and—informed by British war propaganda clichés—believes it is seeing the Japanese sadistically forcing a British officer to work on his knees.

For Nicholson, Warden and the Japanese Colonel Saito the bridge symbolises a purely personal goal in different ways. Nicholson is the most authentically Leanian hero, for his interest is in the creation of it. For him the bridge represents beauty in the middle of this harsh jungle/prison camp environment (Saito tells him it is 'a beautiful creation') and it also seems to provide a chance for immortality (or at least 600 years of it). Nicholson is a compulsive fantasist (for example, his reverie on the evening before the opening—and destruction—of the bridge); when he marches in with his men whistling 'Colonel Bogey', or is victorious over Saito regarding a P.O.W. camp regulation, the 'glory' is purely his own creation, as Lean stresses by fading in the triumphant music on both occasions over a close-up of his face. Saito speaks of escaping from the camp as an 'escape from reality', but Nicholson achieves the latter by staying in the camp and constructing the bridge. Like other Lean heroes and heroines, he is torn between the rational—he maintains that building the bridge is necessary to keep order and discipline amongst his men—and the desire for personal happiness which takes the form of Romantic fantasy. Only in his final moments is he able to see himself at a distance—interestingly, his dying words, 'What have I done?', exactly echo those of Miss Havisham in Lean's *Great Expectations*. The train—its whistle heard over Nicholson's view of the plunger on which he falls—becomes a fatalistic symbol of his own destruction and that of the bridge which he has created and must now destroy.

For both Nicholson and Warden the bridge becomes 'a show' of some kind (Warden's incessant 'Good show!' is made especially repugnant when Lean cuts to him saying it as the sympathetic Saito is stabbed to death); its artifice is contrasted with the images of Nature which often dominate the film. In *Kwai* Nature is no longer merely the refuge that it is in the earlier films. It forms a particularly hostile environment which even makes it unnecessary for the Japanese to erect fences etc. around the camp. Saito also uses the sun (against Nicholson, whether he is made to face it outside or in the 'oven') for evil purposes, but Nature itself often becomes an amoral opposition, as it does to the Warden group when they have to hack their way through the jungle, or when the river's level drops during the night. Nature can be liberating, however, as when Shears escapes by jumping into the river (somewhat reminiscent of the falls into water in earlier Lean films). And watching all the man-made madness in the jungle below is the hawk, a symbol of natural freedom, which soars through the sky in the opening and closing shots of the film (an example of Lean's liking for circular structures), imprisoned neither physically nor by vanity and military codes of conduct.

Jonathan Sanders

Barrier, or Colonel Nicholson in *The Bridge on the River Kwai*. This isolation marks the character off as both extraordinary and demented. The cost of his 'genius' is self-torment, in which courage is not far removed from masochism and Messianic fervour a dimension of his madness. There is a sense of some undisclosed secret in these characters which seeks cover under grandiose display. Lawrence's career was once described as that of a man constantly "backing into the limelight".

The central image of *Lawrence of Arabia* is the mirage. Its most memorable visual manifestation is the extraordinary sustained shot of Sherif Ali (Omar Sharif) as he slowly emerges out of the desert, but is in a way the key to Lawrence himself. The mirage matches his self-delusions, the enigma he poses to others and to himself, the shocking revelation of him as a 'hollow man' (after the atrocities he authorises on the retreating Turkish army) and his dim perception of a destiny that always seems tantalisingly out of reach.

Hallucination? Delirium? Can this really be the world of David Lean, a director generally characterised as cold, impersonal and ineffably bourgeois? But underneath the stoical reserve there is a swirling passion, which reveals itself either in romantic reverie (perhaps most boldly at the end of *Great Expectations* where Lean destroys the continuity in order to construct an ending of purest wish-fulfilment) or in a kind of exoticism, a willingness to surrender to the spirit of place that characterises the action of *The Passionate Friends*, *Summertime* and *Lawrence of Arabia* (and one can only imagine the film he might make of *A Passage to India*!) In *Lawrence of Arabia*, the desert responds to, echoes and finally mocks the aspirations of Lawrence, and condemns the soul of this neurotic nomad to wander forever between the winds. If *Brief Encounter* is Lean's *Belle de Jour* (the faintly scandalous day-time sexual fantasies of a bored middle-class woman who by night is a model housewife), then *Lawrence* is his *The Searchers*.

Neil Sinyard

RYAN'S DAUGHTER

(October 6)

Director: David Lean.

Great Britain, 1970.

Script: Robert Bolt.

Photography: Freddie Young.

Music: Maurice Jarre.

Leading Players: Sarah Miles (*Rosy Ryan*), Robert Mitchum (*Charles Shaughnessy*), Trevor Howard (*Father Collins*), Christopher Jones (*Randolph Doryan*), John Mills (*Michael*), Leo McKern (*Tom Ryan*).

Metrocolor/Scope. Certificate AA. 206 minutes.

Ryan's Daughter, like all of Lean's epics, is an uneven work, rather clumsy and evasive in its

treatment of politics especially, but with many great moments in the major part of the narrative concerning the eponymous heroine's Romantic search for happiness in a vicious Irish village community during World War One. Rosy Ryan is another Lean heroine who becomes trapped in a dull marriage (symbolically heralded by the drab, oppressive ceiling she looks at on her wedding night), this time to the local schoolteacher Charles Shaughnessy, whose artificial and intellectual world, in contrast to Rosy's natural and emotional one, is established through various telling details: the flowers he presses in a heavy book next to her ('I like them better growing', she says); the bust of Beethoven (whose music he often plays) which has the same pose, and faces in exactly the same direction, as Charles himself on more than one occasion (though the most overt is when the widescreen format allows Lean to show both their profiles in the same shot). Rosy finds a Romantic escape from this repressing domestic life in the person of the British army officer Doryan, who is both physically and psychologically wounded. This leads directly to the film's two finest scenes (far superior in my view to the famous storm sequence, which is one of the rare occasions when Lean does seem little more than technically competent—though it is impressive for that alone): Rosy and Doryan's first meeting in the pub and their later love-making in the forest.

The earlier sequence groups together the community's three greatest outsiders (all are taunted at some point by 'the mob'—on which this film is Lean's strongest attack), Rosy, Doryan and Michael, the deformed village idiot. When the latter thumps his foot against a bench, Doryan is reminded of his war experiences (and the wound which makes him a cripple like Michael); as he shakes violently at the bar, and Michael (frightened by seeing Doryan as other see him?) runs out, Lean's subjective technique becomes more intense than it has ever been, taking us into Doryan's mind where he is curling up in a trench, afraid of the exploding shells. The background is dark (as when Laura begins her reminiscences in *Brief Encounter*) but a hand penetrates the gloom. It is Rosy's hand, returning the Major and ourselves to present reality (similar to the ambiguous cut near the end of *Brief Encounter*); the darkness fades, 'real' sounds return, and the couple, finding in each other an escape from their isolation, embrace passionately. It is perhaps Lean's most beautiful, economical and psychologically profound single sequence, as the subsequent forest scene is his most deliriously romantic, combining eroticism with a pantheistic view of Nature. In this extraordinary sequence the Lean heroine finally achieves her total escape from society's repressions. But the film as a whole is not so optimistic; the latter half stresses that reality cannot permanently live up to Romantic fantasy. Even the priest's parting gift to Rosy (like the urchin's to Jane Hudson in *Summer Madness*) suggests this: 'It's supposed to be a fragment of Saint Patrick's staff. I don't suppose it is, though'.

Jonathan Sanders

Sarah Miles in 'Ryan's Daughter'

LAWRENCE OF ARABIA

(September 29)

Director: David Lean.

Great Britain, 1962.

Script: Robert Bolt.

Photography: Freddie Young.

Music: Maurice Jarre.

Leading Players: Peter O'Toole (*Lawrence*), Alec Guinness (*Prince Feisal*), Anthony Quinn (*Auda Abu Tayi*), Jack Hawkins (*General Allenby*), Omar Sharif (*Sherif Ali*), José Ferrer (*Turkish Bey*).

Technicolor/Scope. Certificate A. 222 minutes.

For W.H. Auden in the 1930s, the life of T.E. Lawrence was "an allegory of the transformation of the Truly Weak Man into the Truly Strong Man, an answer to the question: 'How shall the self-conscious man be saved?'" Lawrence was an outsider who, in his Arabian adventures, succeeded in making creative use of private obsession. He was a divided man who was both exhibitionist and recluse, shy and yet possessed of indomitable will, an intellectual yet also a man of action.

For David Lean, Lawrence becomes another in his roll-call of isolated visionaries, like Ralph Richardson's aircraft designer in *The Sound*





WARREN OATES



The recent death of Warren Oates in his early fifties has deprived the American cinema of one of its most combative and quietly inspired actors. In the age of the package deal, Oates' stubbly meanness seems to hark back to a more innocent and expressive age in the cinema. As a Southerner (born in Depoy, Kentucky) who did nothing to hide his roots, his persona seemed increasingly odd—neither West nor East, but angry and alien. If there is a word to sum him up, it is 'mean'. From cheapo Westerns to the existential teasers of Monte Hellman, Oates played a character who chose to scowl at the world with a kind of disaffected curiosity.

This is one reason why he struck such a strong chord among European audiences. The other reason, though, is perhaps more important and more general: Oates was a B-actor, part of the small army of character actors that has always seemed such a paradoxical part of the Hollywood dream. Stock villains were everywhere—from the most prestigious Western to the cheapest gang movie—and yet somehow retained an individuality which, by rights, should not have been theirs. Oates was that stock character—in TV as well as in the cinema—but he accentuated the rebellious individuality possible within the system by his choice of roles: the longstanding association with Sam Peckinpah (*Ride the High Country*, 1962; *Major Dundee*, 1965; *The Wild Bunch*, 1969; *Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia*, 1974) implied a deliberate choice of (right-wing) anarchic subjects. The implication is confirmed by his work for Peckinpah's spiritual heirs, most obviously Milius (*Dillinger*, 1974); more waywardly, Monte Hellman (*The Shooting*, 1966; *Two Lane Blacktop*, 1971; *Cockfighter*, 1974; *China 9, Liberty 37*, 1978).

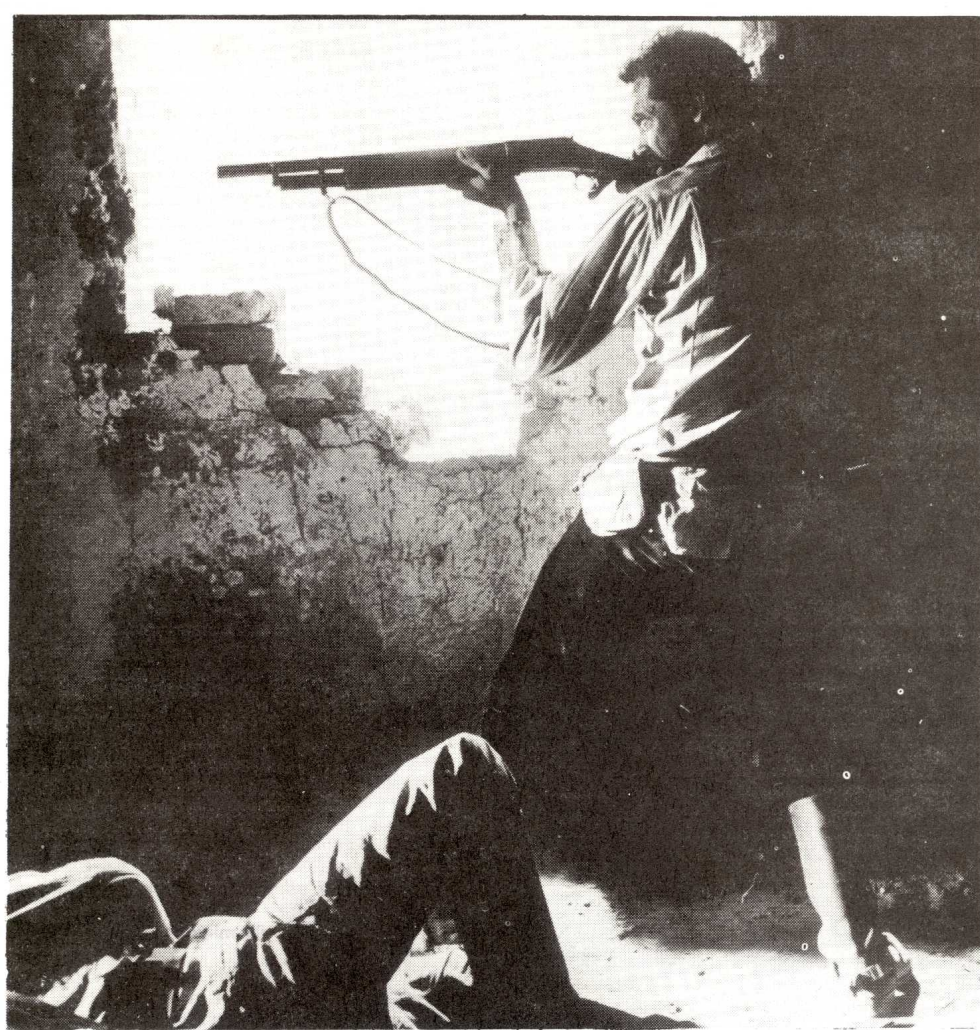
The impassive brutality of his performances taken to delirious extremes in Tom McGuane's *92 in the Shade*—was often touched with humour, though the idea of turning that sardonic reserve into fully comic performances was one of the less interesting facets of Oates' recent career: in Spielberg's 1941 he played Colonel 'Madman' Maddox, a fairly forgettable cameo; in Ivan Reitman's enormously popular Reaganite army comedy, *Stripes*, his performance as sergeant-major Hulka was painful to watch—the growling and thundering seemed to

come from some bear on a chain in an entertainment arcade, certainly not from the grizzled warrior of so many thinking (and unthinking) action pictures.

Oates began his career as a dishwasher in New York, and his acting history contains much that is accidental or routine. (Without that, in fact, his quality as a veteran of B-roles would not exist, and it is worth asking how much European critics tend to romanticise the seamier side of American showbiz.) There is a large volume of TV work, in exactly those areas one might expect: episodes of *Rawhide*, *The Lawman*, *Laramie*, *The Virginian* (and, more surprisingly, *The Outer Limits*). (See the impressive checklist in the June issue of the *Monthly Film Bulletin* for full details.) His work for the cinema was often small-scale, carefully crafted, and uncommented—how many people have remarked on his excellent supporting performance as Sissy Spacek/Holly's father in *Badlands*, where his role fills in the outline motivation for the young girl's blank identification with Martin Sheen, with escape, with haphazard violence? And what a shame no one pointed to Oates' performance in *The Border* as an example of what was *wrong* with the film—stranded in a movie without a narrative or philosophical drive, his growling evocation of a brutal Mexican border smuggler looked out of place—a Peckinpah performance isolated in a film with many pretensions and little to say.

Out of the morass of regular work, several roles remain outstanding definitions of all that is best about American actors—take *The Wild Bunch*, *Dillinger*, *Major Dundee*, and *Cockfighter*, and what they offer is a degree of introspection and observation that makes them perfect examples of how courageous and experimental the 'commercial' cinema can be. Oates' performances, in which words almost have to be prised from the man (literally, in *Cockfighter*), are surely, evocative, tirelessly circling around their subject. In the year that he died, he had been working on two films, Richard Fleischer's *Tough Enough* and John Badham's *Blue Thunder*; one hopes now that all his TV as well as his film work can be recovered from the vaults and given the place it deserves within the history of modern American cinema.

Chris Auty



THE WILD BUNCH

(August 22)

Director: Sam Peckinpah.

U.S.A., 1969.

Script: Walon Green, Sam Peckinpah. Based on a story by Walon Green, Roy N. Sickner.

Photography: Lucien Ballard.

Music: Jerry Fielding.

Leading Players: William Holden (*Bishop*), Ernest Borgnine (*Dutch*), Robert Ryan (*Thornton*), Edmond O'Brien (*Sykes*), Warren Oates (*Lyle Gorch*).

Technicolor/Scope. Certificate X. 145 minutes.

The Wild Bunch is a Wagnerian western. As it swoons over the Nietzschean exploits of a bunch of outlaws committed to finding self-affirmation through bloody violence, it apotheosises the death-wish and the death throes of a whole cultural form and destroys the currency of its language. It is a film whose complexities and contradictions tore apart—finally and irrevocably—the simplistic pieties of the traditional western and exploded it into the modern chaos of our own time, an explosion from which the genre has yet to recover, if it ever does.

Significantly, the film is set in 1913, one year before the World War that is to pull America for the first time into an awesome sense of its global role and responsibilities and twenty years after the closing of Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier. "We've got to start thinking beyond our guns", says the leader Pike (William Holden), "those days are closing fast". The tension felt between America's violent heritage and its imminent internationalism throws the Vietnam War as a grubby ghost across the entire perspective of the film, giving a painful sense of the present unusual in the western (until then, predominantly a nostalgic, elegiac form) to its new extremes of violence and its quizzical attitude to American interventionism.

From the extraordinary opening onwards, launched by a classic Eisensteinian piece of parallel montage where some children (the future) watch a scorpion (the Wild Bunch) being devoured by hordes of ants (the modern world),

The Wild Bunch represents a convulsive drive towards death. With the decline and imminent demise of John Ford, it fell to his disciple Peckinpah to complete the exploration of the fundamental ambivalence of the American frontier myth, which is so closely bound up with the country's sense of the formation of its history and national psyche and the articulation of its ideology and destiny. It was Peckinpah's destiny to articulate this ambivalence definitively in *The Wild Bunch*. It was his tragedy and his fate that he could only do this honestly by pushing the western towards self-destruction and his own sensibilities to the point of exhaustion. After this film, the western and Peckinpah could never—and have never been—the same.

Neil Sinyard



TWO LANE BLACKTOP

(September 1)

Director: Monte Hellman.

U.S.A., 1971.

Script: Rudolph Wurlitzer, Will Corry.

Photography: Jack Deerson.

Leading Players: James Taylor (*The Driver*), Warren Oates (*G.T.O.*), Laurie Bird (*The Girl*), Dennis Wilson (*The Mechanic*).

Technicolor/Scope. Certificate AA. 101 minutes.

Two Lane Blacktop has probably become a cult movie for all the wrong reasons—for its on-the-road resonances, for the macho characters, for a certain U.S. chic. The fact is that *Blacktop* displays the best qualities of director Monte Hellman: a free-wheeling style that allows its story of obsession to retain a certain humour; and which permits characters with little to say a great space for evocation. The story—of two fanatical car freaks driving their hotted-up '55 Chevrolet across the States—hardly exists. Its mood is overwhelming. The two men go from race to race, gambling on the outcome to get enough money to continue their apparently pointless journey. On the way they pick up a girl (Laurie Bird) who is attracted to the Driver (James Taylor) but sleeps with the Mechanic (Dennis Wilson). They come up against a driver in a flash Pontiac (Warren Oates) and a challenge is set: the two cars will race to Washington, and the winner will take both cars. The Girl moves into the Pontiac and the race becomes a frenzied competition of repressed desire. At a roadside diner the Girl abandons both cars and takes off on the back of a motorcycle.....

In outline, *Blacktop* is a film about that great American subject—the competing of masculine wills—and its form (the cross country journey) even suggests that this may be some allegory on the State of the Nation. But Hellman's real interests are harder to classify: time, the space between people, the place that exists between spoken intentions and our most deeply held desires. In one sense, there is no question but that the film is a parody: these men in their super-charged machines, racing nowhere in particular, exhibit all the worst signs of pointless aggression that a technological society can breed. But that doesn't allow for the *tenderness* that Hellman clearly extends to his characters, nor for the sympathy he feels with those who take out their un-nameable angst on the existing shapes of the world they know. In personal terms, but with historical and sociological resonances, *Two Lane Blacktop* is about why 'the road' has become such a crucial fiction within the American dream since the James Dean generation. It is about getting nowhere fast, and about how that unique American pursuit symbolises so much. Existential in tone, maybe, *Two Lane Blacktop* is a surprisingly articulate movie.

Warren Oates' performance, it must be said, is not the crux of the film. In one sense, any actor would have done, and the casting of Oates as the brash and boastful Pontiac driver is just a lucky addition. But the relationship that develops between the car mad *young* men in the Chevy, and the older man in the status symbol, is finally articulated. When the latter develops engine trouble during the race, the others wait and even help. When Oates' certainty about the perfection of his machine is shattered, we are expected to laugh, sympathetically, at his realisation that the gods of technology do not always provide. The youngsters are almost silent, devoted, introspective; Oates is brash, toothy, all bark, and the contrast is somehow sustained for 100 minutes. Surely, we think, it should have been the other way round?

It's an ingenious idea—to allow the older and more experienced actor to give his weight to the film in a rather disguised form. And Hellman's ironic intelligence is constant. If we ask what the 'point' of the film is, the answer is not clear. But the performances alone have given us all we need to know: Oates and the kids are apparently miles apart. He is 'into' status, speed, appearance; they are into tuning, performance, the experience. But the carpet-pulling finale explains how unimportant that division really is. In the end, it suggests, the fact that all three men are running *at all* is the real question. And the fact that the Girl leaves them is a ringing, rather caustic commentary on the ways their lives have failed.

Chris Auty

DILLINGER

(September 5)

Director: John Milius.
U.S.A., 1973.

Script: John Milius.

Photography: Jules Brenner.
Music: Barry Devorson.

Leading Players: Warren Oates (*John Dillinger*), Ben Johnson (*Melvin Purvis*), Michelle Phillips (*Billie Frechette*), Cloris Leachman (*The Lady in Red—Anna Sage*), Harry Dean Stanton (*Homer Van Meter*).

Colour. Certificate X. 102 minutes (cut from 107).

"The Americans are certainly great hero-worshippers" said Oscar Wilde, "and always take their heroes from the criminal classes... Perhaps, after all, America has never been discovered. I myself would say it had merely been detected".

John Milius's film of Dillinger is a feature-length elaboration of this Wildean observation. It is a romanticised portrayal of the famous gangster that is quite without the kind of liberal guilt and the sense of criminal as social victim that animates a film like, say *Bonnie and Clyde*. Blithely taking liberties with established fact, Milius, in collaboration with his leading actor Warren Oates, goes about constructing a tribute to a badman, who is attractive, essentially non-violent and is drawn to a life of crime less for money than for fame. According to Milius, Dillinger represents the repressed lawlessness in us all and, if we cannot emulate, we can at least admire. "You've been robbed by the Dillinger gang", says the hero cheerily to his victims at the film's opening, "That's the best there is".

As Dillinger's fame grows, so does the determination of the G. Man who pursues him, Melvin Purvis, presented as a sort of Jim Jardine of the American Depression and played with an effective surly brutishness by Ben Johnson. Purvis becomes steadily embittered by the charisma of Dillinger which jauntily eclipses his own and seems to undermine the respect for himself, which Purvis believes is his due, and respect for the law, by which Purvis's whole life is defined. Warren Oates and Ben Johnson played brothers in *The Wild Bunch* and Dillinger and Purvis are brothers of a sort in this film, both obsessed with publicity, both enacting an elaborately personalised American frontier myth that seems anachronistic to practically everyone but themselves. The film develops into a story of pursuit in which a mysterious and disturbing kinship is perceived between hunter and hunted: Purvis the dark shadow behind Dillinger's cheeky banditry; Dillinger the mocking iconoclast behind Purvis's sense of justice and self-esteem.

The film was made for American International Pictures and it has all the exuberance of Corman without happily the concomitant crudities of his productions. John Milius develops what is to become a recognisable trait: a preoccupation with renegade American heroes who are either individualists (Evel Knievel), outlaws (Dillinger, Judge Roy Bean), drop-outs (Jeremiah Johnson) or anachronisms (Teddy Roosevelt) but who all go against the contemporary grain. This gells nicely with the screen persona of Warren Oates, which is that of an outsider, instinctive more than intellectual, animalistic, contentedly fatalistic and a man seeking a way to die according to his own lights. Oates's most successful films are probably those in which the morality is as cockeyed as his grin. *Dillinger* certainly qualifies.

Neil Sinyard

BRING ME THE HEAD OF ALFREDO GARCIA

(September 15)

Director: Sam Peckinpah.
U.S.A./Mexico, 1974.

Script: Gordon Dawson, Sam Peckinpah.

Photography: Alex Phillips Jnr.

Music: Jerry Fielding.

Leading Players: Warren Oates (*Bennie*), Isela Vega (*Elita*), Gig Young (*Quill*), Robert Webber (*Sappensly*), Helmut Dantine (*Max*), Kris Kristofferson (*Paco*).

DeLuxe Colour. Certificate X. 112 minutes.

Warren Oates appeared in four films for director Sam Peckinpah. The most important of these, at least from the point of view of the actor, was the extraordinary *Bring Me the Head of Alfredo Garcia*, in which Oates played the leading character and turned in one of the best performances of his career. Referring to his favourite Peckinpah role in an interview published in *Film Comment* (January-February 1981), Oates said:

"Yes, well, it had a beginning, a middle, and an end: it started at the beginning of the picture and ended at the end of the picture. A lot of my roles start somewhere else. But it was the emotional life of the character, really, because I tried to say it all: what I knew about Sam and his love for Mexico. I really tried to *do* Sam Peckinpah: as much as I knew about him, his mannerisms and everything he did."

The plot hinges on the involvement of Benny, an exiled loser down on his luck in Mexico, in a bounty hunt for the head of Alfredo Garcia, the

father of the powerful El Jefe's unborn illegitimate grandchild. The quest takes on a mystic quality that holds in abeyance the doomed inevitability of loss, whilst the sordid mechanics of finding and delivering the grisly trophy are underscored by the lyrical love story at the core of the film.

At the time of its release *Alfredo Garcia* was widely attacked for its violence, with only a handful of critics appreciating the film's brilliant mixture of romantic tenderness and Gothic horror. It's one of Peckinpah's finest achievements.

Supporting film:

GUNS IN THE AFTERNOON (RIDE THE HIGH COUNTRY)

Director: Sam Peckinpah. U.S.A., 1961.

With: Randolph Scott, Joel McCrea, Ronald Starr, Mariette Hartley, Warren Oates.

Colour/Scope. Cert. U. 93 minutes.

BADLANDS

(September 22)

Director: Terrence Malick.
U.S.A., 1973.

Script: Terrence Malick

Photography: Brian Probyn, Tak Fujimoto, Stevan Lerner.

Music: George Tipton. Excerpts from works by Carl Orff, Gunold Keetman and Erik Satie.

Leading Players: Martin Sheen (*Kit Carruthers*), Sissy Spacek (*Holly*), Warren Oates (*Father*), Ramon Bieri (*Cato*).

Colour. Certificate X. 94 minutes.

One of the songs heard over the evocative soundtrack of *Badlands* is 'Love is Strange'. That sentiment reverberates in the film as a James Dean look-alike blazes a trail of destruction across America's badlands in the 1950s and his story is lovingly recorded in her journal by the girl Holly he takes with him. The brutality of his progress is counterpointed by her oddly tender narration and her faulty assessment of what might interest and appeal to her audience. Malick has described the character of the girl as that of "an innocent in a drama above her head" and the boy as a self-regarding "poisonous weed" who might seem "like a rebel, but is more like an Eisenhower conservative". With the action filtered through a child-like vision, augmented by poetic





photography and a hauntingly original soundtrack, the director keeps the audience at some remove from easy moral judgments, detaching them from the horror, intriguing them by the differentness of the characterisation, challenging them with a romanticised impression of murder and madness. Innocence has rarely looked more dangerous, nor myth so insidious.

A contribution from Arthur Penn is acknowledged on the credits and, considering Penn's enormous influence on the new American cinema, one might be inclined to see the jagged narrative rhythm of *Badlands*, its stylised violence and its savage version of pastoral as more derivative than it actually is. But as his second film, the remarkable *Days of Heaven* confirmed, Malick is a true original, a Mark Twain for the modern age, with a sensitive eye and ear for the myths that accrete around the American landscape and a complex sense of childhood, innocence, Nature and fate. He plays word and image against each other, as a wide-eyed young narrator spins an idealised fantasy that finds its justification in beautiful imagery but is contradicted by the enigmatic behaviour of the adults whose significance the narrator fails to see.

Martin Sheen and Sissy Spacek are excellent in the main roles, and Warren Oates gives terrific authority to a cameo performance as Holly's ill-fated father. Oates appeared in quite a number of the more experimental and difficult examples of the American cinema of the Sixties and Seventies. In films of maverick directors such as Boetticher, Fonda, Peckinpah, Malick, Hellman, Milos and Kaufman, he lent a powerful offbeat presence that seemed positively to fuel these films' prodigious nonconformity. By the end of the decade, however, anarchic originality had sadly given way to reactionary stridency. One of Oates's last lines as the Sergeant in the unspeakable *Stripes* becomes a sort of fond requiem for the filmic revolution with which Oates had been associated and a requiem for his own fascinating career, which was beginning to harden into parodic performances of authoritarianism. "I'm getting too old for this shit", he says.

Neil Sinyard

COCKFIGHTER

(September 22)

Director: Monte Hellman.

U.S.A., 1974.

Script: Charles Willeford. Based on his own novel.

Photography: Nestor Almendros.

Music: Michael Franks.

Leading Players: Warren Oates (*Frank Mansfield*), Richard B. Schull (*Omar Baradinsky*), Harry Dean Stanton (*Jack Burke*), Ed Begley Jr. (*Tom Peebles*), Laurie Bird (*Dody White*), Troy Donaghue (*Randall Mansfield*).

Metrocolor. Uncertified. 83 minutes.

Refused a certificate because of its subject matter, commercially a disaster even in the States, *Cockfighter* is one of the great American movies of the last twenty years. Its story of an obsession—a mute Warren Oates trying to win the much-coveted 'Cockfighter of the Year' award—is fascinating material in any case. It is also, one suspects, close to Oates' own heart—set in the South; a story of pointless rebellion against an enemy which can never be pinned down, since what is at stake is the cockfighter's memory (of having lost his prime cock once before through boastful pride) and his self-esteem (which means that he will ignore his childhood sweetheart and potential wife, Mae Elizabeth, in favour of the fights). Finally, perhaps more importantly, the construction of *Cockfighter* is truly extraordinary—Godard might have edited some of the sequences for all their abstract passion; while others are clearly calculated attempts to keep happy a producer who thought that cock-fighting might prove an exploitable subject with distributors. Hellman's career, it seems, is now finished — at least as a director of commercial American movies, and one is not surprised.

In a sense, there is almost nothing to be said about the film. Its form is loose-jointed. Its plot can be summarised in eight words. And its supporting performances, some of them excellent (Harry Dean Stanton, the master of consumptive obsessions; Laurie Bird from *Two Lane Blacktop*; the as-yet-unknown Steve Railsback), only hover on the fringes of the movie. Because its centre is, overwhelmingly, Warren Oates. Silent—because of the oath he swore to himself after losing his prize bird through garrulousness—and suppressed, his performance is one sustained example of method acting that shows no trace of display or self-consciousness. It is entirely internal. Oates' face, grimly, humorously determined, broke, inspired, crazed, might come from a Herzog film—except that the German director would have built around it some elaborate historical showcase for obsession. The movie becomes, almost, a thriller: can Oates sustain the tension and the pace for long enough to reach the obvious climax—winning the coveted and meaningless trophy?

On a larger scale, the movie fascinates because it mocks all the usual tricks and treats of a cinema which adores success and holds it up as the goal of life: as a Southerner, an outlaw, and a crazy, the Oates character is already well out on the fringes of the American Dream. And his fascination with a prize that can lead nowhere suggests—because we come to adore the central figure—that all the other prizes in the world are as meaningless as this one (perhaps more so: they do not even have the glistening appeal of a personal Grail).

The cinema and the circus have always been awkward but closely related cousins and *Cockfighter* uses that relation to make spectacle: the camera cutting around the ring of spectators and gamblers; the fragility of the event which has provoked the excitement; the knowledge that we are leaning as far forward in our seats as those ringside punters. As such, the film is a directorial *tour de force*. But it is unimaginable that it could have been made without Warren Oates' performance.

Chris Auty

GALLIPOLI

(August 26-31)

Director: Peter Weir.
Australia, 1981.

Script: David Williamson. **Story:** Peter Weir.
Inspired by *The Broken Years* by Bill Gammage,
and war histories by C.E.W. Bean.

Photography: Russell Boyd.

Music: Brian May.

Leading Players: Mark Lee (*Archie Hamilton*), Mel Gibson (*Frank Dunne*), Bill Hunter (*Major Barton*), Robert Grubb (*Billy Lewis*), Tim McKenzie (*Barney Wilson*), David Argue (*"Snowy"*).

Eastman Colour/Scope. Certificate A. 111 minutes.

The romantic surfaces of Peter Weir's *Gallipoli* should not blind anyone to its structural ironies. Its seemingly relaxed development conceals a tragic sense of its ultimate destination, and ostensibly casual details assume an ominous importance when the total strategy of the film is perceived.

The climax of the film is the battle at Gallipoli, one of the bloodiest episodes of World War One where thousands of young Australian and New Zealand soldiers were presented as strategic fodder to the enemy to facilitate a counter-offensive by the British. The film is indignant about insensitive military blundering, but Weir believes that too many atrocities have been committed in the name of being 'anti-war' for this to be the primary purpose of the film. It is concerned to examine and understand the misplaced enthusiasm which drew so many young men to the battle and, to this end, it particularly explores the friendship between two combatants, a farmboy Archie (Mark Lee) and a more worldly drifter, Frank (Mel Gibson).

Both are exceptional sprinters, who meet for the first time when competing against each other on the athletics track. There are inevitable echoes of *Chariots of Fire* here, but the tone of the two films could hardly be more diametrically opposed: the nostalgic imperialism celebrated by the latter being precisely the quality that leads to the holocaust of the former. The athletics imagery of *Gallipoli* becomes increasingly menacing. Races against time, presented as chivalrous and somewhat jokey encounters on the athletics field, are a matter of life and death on the battle-field. Clocks and watches there become instruments as lethal as machine-guns since successful strategy is all a matter of timing. Archie's legs—"steel springs", as he calls them, an image that eerily evokes also the world of the watch and the gun—are to carry him with unseemly haste into the heart of danger. Even his lying about his age, so he can be accepted as old enough to enlist, becomes a relevant detail about someone who throughout is trying to cheat time.

There are similar details in the earlier part of the film which seem inessential but assume a larger significance. A recruiting drive interrupts an athletics meeting early on in a manner that anticipates the fusion of athleticism and the military in the film's tense finale, when the fate of a whole company is to depend on the speed at which Frank can run. A humorous scene, when the young Australians poke fun at British military arrogance, takes on a darker perspective in the light of events, when the same kind of military pomposity is callously to put these young men's lives at risk.

There is some neat satire of Australian insularity at home and abroad. Frank and Archie at one stage meet an old timer who materialises out of the Australian desert (significantly, Archie's watch, a gift from his uncle which he has used as a compass for navigation, has led them astray) and who does not even know there is a war on in Europe. The attitude the man embodies explains the eagerness of Australian youths to enlist. They wish to have something more than

just an impression of the outside world. *Gallipoli*, which they can hardly pronounce, is not so much a place as an idea. They see it as a challenge to their manhood and a promise of exotic adventure. The first shot of the battle area is unforgettable, seen at night through a blue mist and its mysterious lights giving it the appearance, as Weir has said, of a ghostly funfair.

As the friendship between Archie and Frank develops, so does the contrast between them. The impact of the War on Frank brings out his dogged will simply to survive, whilst the blond Archie is given the archaic nobility of a Rupert Brooke, viewing the conflict as "an adventure somehow larger than life". The final scene shows Frank running parallel to the battle whilst Archie is running straight into it. These are eloquent images for Frank's defensive irony and Archie's headlong heroism, just as their respective destinies seem somehow to crystallise the fate of pragmatism and romanticism in our century.

Gallipoli is a straightforward film, particularly after the enigmas of such previous works from Weir as *Picnic at Hanging Rock* and *The Last Wave*. It is also an intelligent and impassioned one, characteristically sensitive to the impact of landscape on character, and leading, as Weir's films invariably do, from a situation of normality to one of total nightmare. On the eve of battle a Major starts singing along to his recording of Bizet's *Pearlfishers*, and the gesture has such tingling unease because the moment is not presented as one of charming respite but a moving lamentation at impending death. The last shot gathers up all the preceding themes—youth, adventurism, the ravages of war—and freezes them in a striking tableau, as the Dreams of Empire blow up in someone's face. It is the film's final deadly irony, taking you back to the moment when the uncle has been reading aloud the advice of that arch-imperialist Kipling about "being a man", in so doing infusing his nephew with a spirit that will be responsible for his not living beyond the age of eighteen.

Neil Sinyard





CLAUDE MILLER

Claude Miller (right) and Bruno Nuytten during the filming of 'The Best Way to Walk'

French cinema has not enjoyed a particularly good reputation in Britain in recent years. More than twenty years after the initial excitement of the New Wave, a second wave of any force has failed to materialise. Claude Miller has often been cited as one of the young hopefuls of this mythical revival, along with countless other film-makers who have mostly failed at the hurdle of a second feature. Miller has succeeded in making three films to date, all of which I think are of considerable interest in themselves and when taken together constitute an auspicious beginning to what one hopes will be a great career.

On the surface, all three films appear to be quite different in terms of style and content. *The Best Way to Walk*, for example, has tended to be regarded (wrongly, I think) as a naturalistic depiction of life in a French summer camp for boys. In fact it is a tightly structured and richly allusive work. Inspired more by Ingmar Bergman's ideas about humiliation in childhood than any documentary impulse, it opens with the image of two small boys attempting to stand on their heads. One succeeds, while the other keeps toppling over. It's a simple but very effective means of expressing one of the film's themes, which Tom Milne has described as being "the social necessity of acquiring sufficient skills to maintain a balance."

The two main characters in *The Best Way to Walk* are at that difficult transitional stage in life when insecurity abounds, especially in relation to sexual matters. Miller sets up a conflict between two apparently opposite types (one shy and sensitive, the other brash and arrogant) and succeeds throughout the movie to reveal a very great deal indeed about the painful and destructive process of conforming to social and sexual norms. The film manages to be both extremely sensitive and tough at the same time, and Miller's fondness for extremes is manifested in one extraordinary scene. The entire camp are gathered together for what seems to be just another excuse for the pompous director to deliver one of his ridiculous speeches. But it transpires that it is also the occasion for one of the camp monitors to be publicly disgraced for having been caught with pornographic photographs. Refusing just to accept the director's moral sermon, the young man suddenly pours out a stream of verbal abuse and then proceeds to have a violent epileptic fit.

Extremes of a different kind caused Miller's second film, *This Sweet Sickness*, to be given a very rough ride by critics and audiences alike. In adapting Patricia Highsmith's novel to the screen, Miller had the courage to give full force to the destructive romantic passion of the hero and then proceed to surround this unappealing figure with a gallery of other frustrated characters. Many people found the film too unsympathetic, and François Truffaut (who admired it) said that he thought Miller should have structured the film so that audiences could have identified more with the central character. Truffaut's remarks are interesting in that they make one aware of how much more distanced and critical Miller is of his characters than his former teacher. The two directors have much in common, but one couldn't imagine Truffaut peopling one of his films with some of the more unlikeable characters from *This Sweet Sickness*.

Miller has acknowledged his interest in extremes of behaviour and obsessive characters, saying that

he will always feature them in his films and hope that audiences will not judge them harshly. In *This Sweet Sickness* he combines the sordid and the romantic in a challenging and exciting way. There are problems with the film (the titles announcing dates and times are clumsy), but it certainly deserved better than the harsh treatment awarded to it by the British Press.

The Inquisitor, Miller's latest film, hasn't fared much better with the critics. It came out here the same week as Jean-Jacques Annaud's *Quest for Fire*, a mediocre adventure piece which arrived with dubious cultural credentials and was treated with much more seriousness than it deserved. Miller's film is both technically and artistically superior to Annaud's, making more of a police station and a handful of characters than *Quest for Fire* managed with wilderness locations, a small army of grunting actors and a horde of elephants dressed as mammoths. One might expect the publicity hype for *Quest for Fire* to guarantee wide review coverage, but that was no reason for dismissal or ignoring *The Inquisitor*.

I have discussed *The Inquisitor* and Miller's two other films at some length in the following pages. No great originality can be claimed for the notes, and anyway it is early days yet to be building up rigid theories about a young director's work. My own enthusiasm for the films should be obvious enough, and I'm sure that we can expect even better things from Miller in the future.

Finally, one should acknowledge the importance of at least two of Miller's regular collaborators: Luc Béraud and Bruno Nuytten. Béraud, who is himself a very fine director, worked on the scripting of both *The Best Way to Walk* and *This Sweet Sickness*, and Miller has said that he was responsible for determining "the entire level of social commentary" in the former film. Nuytten is one of France's leading cinematographers and won a much deserved award at this year's Cannes Film Festival for his dazzling work on *Invitation au Voyage*. He photographed both *The Best Way to Walk* and *The Inquisitor* for Miller, achieving particularly fine visual effects in the latter film.

Peter Walsh

THE BEST WAY TO WALK (La Meilleure Façon de marcher)

(September 8)

Director: Claude Miller.
France, 1976.

Script: Claude Miller, Luc Béraud.

Photography: Bruno Nuytten.

Music: Alain Jomy.

Leading Players: Patrick Dewaere (Marc), Patrick Bauchey (Philippe), Christine Pascal (Chantal), Claude Piéplu (Director), Michel Blanc (Deloux)
Eastman colour. English subtitles. Certificate X. 86 minutes. 16 mm print.

Miller's first feature as a director proved to be quite an auspicious début. A critical and



Patrick Dewaere and Patrick Bauchau in 'The Best Way to Walk'

commercial success in France, it was also widely acclaimed and circulated in other countries despite a lack of major film festival prizes. Its initial impact had a lot to do with the freshness of approach that Miller brought to bear on a subject that had already been extensively covered in French literature and cinema. In terms of film alone, directors such as Jean Vigo (*Zéro de Conduite*), René Clément (*Jeux interdits*), François Truffaut (*Les Mistons*, *Les quatre cents coups*), Robert Bresson (*Mouchette*) and Jean Eustache (*Mes Petits Amoureux*), to name but a handful, had made distinguished contributions to the great tradition of French work dealing with childhood and adolescence. *The Best Way to Walk* was seen as continuing this tradition and bringing a particularly interesting perspective to bear in what it had to say about the possible far reaching consequences of childhood experiences.

The setting of Miller's film is a summer camp for boys. Its central characters are drawn not from the children but from two of the young men who are employed as monitors at the camp. One of them, Philippe, is the somewhat shy and retiring son of the camp's pompous director and his project is mounting a theatrical performance. The other is Marc, the brash and much more popular leader of a different group whose main activity is outdoor sports. A personality clash is sparked off between the two when Marc accidentally discovers Philippe indulging in a private erotic fantasy by dressing up as a woman. Philippe's efforts to befriend Marc and protect his secret lead to a series of misunderstandings, humiliations and, finally, a violent confrontation.

A crude outline such as the one above gives no impression of the subtleties and ironies of Miller's film. The ironies begin with the very title itself, which is taken from a French army song that is heard during the course of the film as Marc parades his group through the camp. 'The best way of walking/Is OUR way of walking... they chant; but if the film has a simple message it is almost certainly that there is no 'best way to walk'. Similarly, the character types and situations referred to above (the sensitive Philippe directing his students in a play, the brutish Marc leading his small army of soldiers) are deliberately set up by the film only to be called into question. Which is not to say, one hastens to add, that Miller simply manipulates crude stereotypes. The relationship between Philippe and Marc is a complicated and ambiguous one. Typically for Miller (see *The Inquisitor*), it is set up as a clash between apparent opposites and then undergoes a whole series of shifts and changes until the tension is released (inevitably a violent moment in a Miller film) and a subtle reversal of roles is achieved.

This deterministic process is also to be found at work in Miller's other films. The central characters are always seen to be limited to rigid emotions and patterns of behaviour. Their crippling obsessions are also invariably related to the experiences of childhood. Crucially, though,

this is always presented by Miller in a deliberately vague and ambiguous way, and there are never any flashbacks to the central characters' own childhood. A similar kind of effect is achieved, however, and a good example is provided in *The Best Way to Walk* in the episode involving the little boy (played by Miller's own son) who Philippe discovers is crying because another boy will not talk to him. Philippe's advice is that he should punish the other boy by not speaking to him either, to which the sorrowful response is "But I want him to talk to me". In a much later scene we see the same aggrieved child lying in bed and quietly crying to himself. As Tom Milne has pointed out in the best review of the film that I've come across (*Monthly Film Bulletin*, July 1977), this last scene acts as a kind of flashback to the troubled Philippe's own childhood as, in Milne's words, "one realises the incalculable consequences that may accrue from his tiny storm in a teacup".

It would be unforgivable to end a note on *The Best Way to Walk* without acknowledging both its great sense of humour and the marvellous acting of the entire cast. To quote Tom Milne again, the film is "wonderfully funny in its observation of the life of the camp and the quiddities of human behaviour in a oneupmanship situation, with at least one major comic set-piece (the running gag about the pompous director, superbly played by Claude Piéplu, and the disarming contents of the Suggestion Box that is his proud contribution to progress and togetherness in the camp)".

Peter Walsh

THIS SWEET SICKNESS (Dites-lui que je l'aime)

(September 8)

Director: Claude Miller.
France, 1977.

Script: Claude Miller, Luc Béraud. Based on the novel *This Sweet Sickness* by Patricia Highsmith.

Photography: Pierre Lhomme.
Music: Alain Jomy. "Fantasy in F Minor" by Franz Schubert, "Sonata in D Major" by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart.

Leading Players: Gérard Depardieu (*David Martinaud*), Miou-Miou (*Juliette*), Claude Piéplu (*M. Chouin*), Dominique Laffin (*Lise Dutilleux*), Jacques Denis (*Gérard Dutilleux*), Christian Clavier (*François*).

Eastman Colour. English subtitles. Certificate X. 106 minutes.

Following the critical and commercial success of *The Best Way to Walk* in France, Miller was able to secure backing for a much more expensive and potentially more commercial project. *Dites-lui que je l'aime* is based on the novel *This Sweet Sickness*

by Patricia Highsmith, an author who has provided useful material for film-makers as diverse as Alfred Hitchcock (*Strangers on a Train*), René Clément (*Plein Soleil/Purple Noon*) and Wim Wenders (*The American Friend*). Like Wenders, Miller has not been entirely faithful to his source material, since he and his co-scriptwriter (Luc Béraud, who also worked on *The Best Way to Walk*) have largely dispensed with the novel's thriller mechanics and dubious morality. Again like Wenders, but to totally different effect, Miller and Béraud have crammed their film with cinematic references which range from Hitchcock's *Rebecca* to *Gone With the Wind*. The result is a richly allusive and totally compelling movie whose dismissal by the majority of British critics seems particularly unfair.

At least some of the critical discontent seems to have been a direct result of the differences between the novel and the film. When questioned on the subject Miller has said, somewhat defensively, that he was interested in making "a psychological film rather than a thriller". What interests him most of all is the dilemma of the central character, an obsessive romantic whom Highsmith considered a dangerous madman but whom Miller views with great sympathy and understanding. The result of this difference in attitude is not that the film views its hero uncritically, but rather that it refuses to take a moralising stance. What is important to appreciate about *Dites-lui que je l'aime* is that it is attempting to capture the destructive nature of uncontrollable romantic passion as well as its seductive power. This is why Miller and Béraud have opted for a highly stylised treatment of the novel, using elements of the thriller and melodrama to depict extremes of emotion and locating the drama in a fairly banal social context.

Their approach is evident in the very first scene of the film, in which the central character, David, is seen gazing down from the window of his drab little rented apartment at the equally drab and rain-soaked street below. The highly subjective mood of the scene, conjured up from quite ordinary details, signals straight away that the film is going to draw its audience into the inner world of its protagonist. A marvellous example of just how it goes about this task is provided immediately after the credit titles when David pays a visit to the local cinema. He is shown entering the auditorium and pushing aside a curtain to reveal the image on the screen. The effect is one of entering a dream world, and a further dimension is added to the scene when we realize that the cinema is showing *Rebecca* and that the extract we see from the film is the famous sequence in which Joan Fontaine explores the forbidden wing of Manderley. For Hitchcock's film, like Miller's, is about the strange process of attempting to recapture or recreate a state of love that belongs to the past. The special room at Manderley is, of course, a monument to this yearning, and we soon discover that David's modern equivalent is a chalet in the mountains where he secretly spends his weekends in solitary preparation for the time when he believes he will be reunited with his beloved Lise, a woman he knew as a child and who is now married to somebody else and living in a nearby town.

The film concentrates on David's increasingly desperate and violent attempts to realise his impossible fantasy. He continuously follows and propositions a polite but disinterested Lise, and he eventually becomes indirectly responsible for the



death of her husband. Miller is interested in the extremes of such human behaviour ("I think it's in the moments when they are out of control that people are at their most authentic") and allows his characters' ruling passions full rein. "I believe that anyone in a state of passion—or simply in the first stages of being in love—can imagine himself killing someone or doing something just as extraordinary", he told Jan Dawson in an interview published in *Sight and Sound* (Winter 1977/78). "He may not literally do it, but the impulse is there: I'm convinced that what David is doing on the screen is no more than what other people are doing in their heads . . ."

Yet Miller's purpose isn't quite as obvious or brutal as this might suggest, and a clue to his deeper concerns is provided by one of the film's departures from the novel. In the Highsmith, David knew the woman he loves for a short period two years ago, while in the film it is made clear that they were childhood soul mates. The difference is crucial and its significance can be related back to *The Best Way to Walk*, which Tom Milne has succinctly described as "a brilliantly perceptive account of the troubled legacies attendant upon childhood miseries". The same theme is also present in *Dites-lui que je l'aime*. Miller sees David's passion as "asexual and 'crystallised' . . . frozen at pre-puberty stage", and he subtly develops this concept into a major motif in the film.

Although actual children are only seen on two or three occasions (as, for example, when David observes a young boy and a girl playing a game together), the world of childhood is evoked throughout the film. It is represented explicitly in a photograph of the young David and Lise which the adult David constantly gazes at; but its presence can also be discerned in other forms. There is, for instance, a very child-like quality about David and indeed some of the other characters. His obnoxious friend Philippe, for example, can easily be seen as the 'bad' boy to David's 'good', while the concierge (played by Claude Piéplu, who provided an equally effective parody of the French authority figure in *The Best Way to Walk*) acts towards younger members of the household like a suspicious parent. There are also Lise's slightly ambiguous reactions to David's clumsy and annoying advances, which suggest that she is still touched in some way by their childhood memories even though she has consciously ruled out the possibility of their having an 'adult' relationship.

Equally important to the film's overall perspective is the emphasis placed on the role of Juliette, the girl who lodges in the same house as David and who comes to love him almost as blindly as he loves Lise. As played by the delightful Miou-Miou, Juliette is by far the most positive and sympathetic character in the film. So much so, in fact, that she plays havoc with audience identification. Miller has said that his intention was to show David only as he appears to Lise and Juliette only as she appears to David, but the film fails to maintain such a rigid control of viewpoint. What happens instead is that David's highly disturbed state of mind gradually becomes the controlling influence over the film, but with Juliette (either by accident or design) providing at least some semblance of an alternative. Unlike David, Juliette admits sexuality as the expression of her love, and it is perfectly consistent with the film's misanthropic vision of human relationships that David should brutally reject and murder her. This is still the film's one truly shocking moment, when what begins as a love scene suddenly ends in murder. It can perhaps be usefully compared with the heart-stopping sequence in Claude Chabrol's *Le Boucher* when the wretched character played by Jean Yanne confronts Stéphane Audran's schoolteacher with his killer's knife. Both sequences contain an extraordinary fusion of love and murder, and both end in tragedy.

To continue the comparison with Chabrol, one might say that from this point Miller's film takes off into the giddy heights of stylisation occupied by a film such as *La Rupture*. In a doomed last ditch attempt to find fulfilment, David abducts Lise at a swimming pool (also the location for a climactic sequence in *The Best Way to Walk*) and dresses her in a bridal gown. At which point Miller boldly spirals the film into pure fantasy. As the police arrive to perform their traditional mopping up duties, time and action are suspended, reversed and then transcended as David is allowed—to use Miller's own words again—"to escape into an absolutely marvellous fantasy". It's an audacious ending to a thrilling film.

Peter Walsh

THE INQUISITOR (Garde à vue)

(September 2-7)

Director: Claude Miller.
France, 1981.

Script: Claude Miller, Jean Herman. Based on the novel *Brainwash* by John Wainwright.

Photography: Bruno Nuytten.

Music: Georges Delerue.

Leading Players: Lino Ventura (*Inspector Antoine Gallien*), Michel Serrault (*Jérôme Martinand*), Romy Schneider (*Chantal Martinand*), Guy Marchand (*Inspector Belmont*), Jean-Claude Penchenat (*Police Commissioner*).

Colour. English subtitles. Certificate AA. 90 minutes.

Claude Miller has said, apropos his film adaptation of Patricia Highsmith's novel *This Sweet Sickness*, that his reason for changing the first death in the story from a murder to an accident was because he wished to avoid any question of legal guilt. He didn't want his romantically obsessed protagonist to be bothered by the police. Miller explained in an interview with Jan Dawson (*Sight and Sound*, Winter 1977-78), partly because he believed the French police to be unfilmable. One is therefore a little surprised to find the director's new film presenting itself as nothing less than a traditional *policier*. *Garde à vue* is based on another novel (John Wainwright's *Brainwash*, which is published in France as a *série noire*) and concerns a police interrogation of a prominent lawyer who is suspected of raping and killing two young girls. The action is confined almost exclusively to the police station where the grilling of the lawyer is conducted by two Inspectors during the course of a long and rainy New Year's Eve.

There can be no doubt that the film represented an enormous challenge to Miller and his collaborators, who have surprisingly opted for compressing their material rather than opening it out to more expansive cinematic dimensions. The implications of this approach might seem at first terribly limiting. The small number of characters, for example, doesn't allow for the rich variation of types to be found in *The Best Way to Walk* and

Dites-lui que je l'aime, where the minor roles were skilfully used to mirror the predicament of the main protagonists. Neither is the latter film's display of cinematic bravura an appropriate stylistic option for *Garde à vue*, whose sober and intricate concerns need to be pitched at quite a different level to the dizzyingly romantic extremes of its predecessor. And even more crippling, one would have thought, is the limiting of the action in terms of space (the police station) and time (roughly twelve hours).

Given these restrictions, and given also the director's stated disinterest in generic conventions, it is nothing short of miraculous that *Garde à vue* should succeed as well as it does. Partly it succeeds because of the brilliance of Miller's direction, but essentially the film is a triumph of teamwork. Both the dialogue (written by Michel Audiard, without whom Miller says he could never have made the film) and the acting are crucial elements, since the bulk of the movie is taken up with face to face confrontations between the lawyer and the two policemen. The senior officer, Inspector Gallien, is played by Lino Ventura, that solid veteran of French crime movies. Ventura's very presence carries useful associations, and his playing lends great authority to the role of the pragmatic cop who is convinced of the lawyer's guilt but is also determined to prove the case by absolutely fair means. Playing opposite him as the accused lawyer Jérôme Martinand is Michel Serrault, a more versatile actor who proves to be an ideal choice for capturing the character's movement from arrogant self-assurance to guilty remorse. These superlative performances are more than adequately supported by Guy Marchand as the cop who is prone to beat a confession out of a slippery suspect, and Romy Schneider as Chantal Martinand, the mysterious wife of the lawyer who has her own reasons for suspecting her husband of committing the heinous crimes.

It is partly because of the very solid basis provided by the acting and the dialogue that Miller is able to subvert the genre of the police thriller while appearing to play by the rules of the game. In very crude terms, the basic drive in such films is towards a solution of the crime, with the payoff being the discovery—and possible punishment—of the guilty party. *Garde à vue* denies its audience the satisfaction of such a simple resolution. The police investigation doesn't lead to where it is supposed to lead, and to an extent Miller is concerned to expose the



Romy Schneider in 'The Inquisitor' ('Garde à vue')

inadequacies of such methods of approach. An intimation of this is provided just after the film's splendid opening (a travelling shot over rain-drenched rooftops and down to the glass frontage of the police station) in the strangely disconcerting moment when Inspector Belmont leads Martinaud into a dark office and has to stand on a desk in order to fix a flickering electric light. Later, when Gallien arrives to begin the questioning, he immediately notices some debris on his desk and seems about to regard it as a clue to something sinister before the banal explanation is provided.

No such simple explanations are forthcoming during the subsequent all-night interrogation, which begins innocently enough with the policemen giving the impression that they merely require the lawyer to clear up some discrepancies in his original account of how he discovered the body of the second victim. An arrogant and confident Martinaud cracks jokes and seems more than a match for the plodding Gallien. The lawyer, in fact, seems to have effected a reversal of roles whereby he plays the cat to Gallien's mouse. But the tone gradually changes as Gallien forces Martinaud to revise his story and places him under preventive detention (*garde à vue*) as a suspect. The lawyer confesses that he lied about his movements on the night of the crime—but only, he claims, to conceal the fact that he was visiting a prostitute. He goes on to talk about the inadequacies of his relationship with his wife, who has refused him her bed for many years of their marriage. The wife eventually turns up to produce damning evidence against her husband, who then agrees to make a confession. With the case apparently solved, the body of a new victim is discovered and points to the guilt of another man.

As it happens, the question of who was responsible for the crimes remains in doubt at the end of the film—not least because Martinaud still seems a much more plausible suspect than the replacement one who conveniently arrives to provide the police with an alternative solution. This is merely one of the ambiguities in Miller's film, which continuously points to the difficulties of discovering the truth about its characters and the significance of events. The series of stylised flashbacks which punctuate the long scenes in the police station are important in this respect. Many of these refer back to the scene of the crime and have an eerie, still life quality about them. Some of the shots are repeated with the addition of new information (the shots of the lighthouse, for example, which are accompanied by different sounds), but the overriding impression they convey is of an incomplete picture of events.

I don't think that the film is simply suggesting by this that it is impossible to discover either what happened or who committed the crimes. Such questions are merely displaced as the investigation leads off in different directions despite Gallien's efforts to deal mainly in hard facts. The film becomes more and more a dark and oblique study of the inadequacies in the lives of the central characters, including Gallien, who mentions at one point that he's never been able to keep a wife and who seems to recognize something of himself in Martinaud. Gallien listens to the lawyer's account of how his sexual relationship with his wife quickly changed from one free of inhibitions to feelings of disgust on her part. He also hears the wife's account of the same, in which she talks about her husband's "idées fixes" and, crucially, an episode from the past when she witnessed what she considered to be the man's unhealthy sexual interest in his young niece. Gallien concludes that all this might indeed "describe a pattern of behaviour", but he is more interested in the vital piece of evidence that will nail his suspect.

With the final twist in the plot appearing to demolish Gallien's case as well as the wife's, we are left to ponder over a whole series of conflicting motives and interpretations which have led to the tragedy that is witnessed by a transfixed Gallien in the film's last shot. "Everyone is wrong about everyone", Miller said when explaining the fate of his characters in *Dites-lui que je l'aime*. The comment seems even more apt as a description of what is happening in *Garde à vue*, a film whose intimations of what separates its characters are far more extensive in their implications (also involving, for example, a network of social and class differences) than I have been able to indicate here.

Peter Walsh

LA RONDE

(September 23-28)

Director: Max Ophuls.

France, 1950.

Script: Jacques Natanson, Max Ophuls. Based on the play *Reigen* by Arthur Schnitzler.

Photography: Christian Matras.

Music: Oscar Strauss.

Leading Players: Anton Walbrook (Narrator), Simone Signoret (*Léocadie, the Prostitute*), Serge Reggiani (*Franz*), Simone Simon (*Marie*), Jean Clarieux (*Brigadier*), Daniel Gélin (*Alfred*).

Black and white. English subtitles. Certificate A. 97 minutes.

Several productions of Schnitzler's play *Reigen* followed from its recent emergence into the public domain. The re-issue of Max Ophuls' film of it probably owes less to the developing appreciation of Ophuls' greatness than to the publicity attending new productions of Schnitzler's work on stage and television.

On the other hand, all the productions of the play have tacitly conceded the definitive quality of Ophuls' version just by retaining his title, as against Schnitzler's or some English translation of it. Yet what's been revived along with the play and the movie is an old calumny on Ophuls: that his film made a frivolous reduction (at best, polished and amusing) of Schnitzler's savagely penetrating original.

This claim involves ill-founded assumptions about both the content and the quality of the play: it was, until this year, available in English only in obscure collections and ponderous translations. The circumstances of its disappearance, too, fostered its legend: Schnitzler placed an embargo on productions when its premieres in Vienna and Berlin were marked by public disturbances and (unsuccessful) prosecution for obscenity. While much of the outcry was fuelled by anti-semitism the play undoubtedly was, in 1903, outrageously bold in its emphatic recognition of sexuality—its structure being defined by successive physical couplings—and in its amoral orientation to (often 'sordid') sex rather than to romance or marriage.

But its boldness does not extend beyond defiance of hypocritical and repressive systems of dramatic reticence. Having established its claim to speak of specifically sexual appetite and conduct, the play offers little that is fresh or deep or illuminating. (To call it Schnitzler's masterpiece does severe injustice to his mature work.) Inventiveness and theatrical skill cannot sustain the piece once the thinness of its human perceptions has become clear. Around the half-way point, one gives up hoping that its incidents will gather depth as they accumulate weight, and a gnawing tedium descends. What the recent rash of productions has seemed to prove is that (at least by British actors in an English translation) the play is unplayable.

My own conviction is that the myth of the play's quality is almost entirely the result of the excellence of the film, and that the superiority of the film to any imaginable theatrical presentation of Schnitzler's text is intimately bound up with precisely those changes of tone with which the film has been charged. Schnitzler's play is scathing and pitiless where Ophuls' film is generous and beguiling. But the sarcasm and disgust of *Reigen* are shallow where *La Ronde* is profound in its lightness and charm. One instance: the husband's line "One can really love only in truth and purity" in the central episode between the Young Wife and the Husband. In the play these words can scarcely be more than a joke against the husband's blindness and complacency (he has been cuckolded in the previous episode) and against his hypocrisy—the pattern of the play makes it sure that he will be unfaithful in the next.

The comic point is not missed by the film. But Ophuls' pacing of the scene, and his camera's alertness to moments of unspoken reaction and reflection, allow the line an inwardness, a weight and a relevance that extend well beyond the immediate context of infidelity and negotiated deceptions. There is an ambiguity in the husband's speaking. He is not talking *to* his wife. He is in some degree talking *at* her—his words are calculated to block her enquiries into his past. But he may also be thinking aloud. And insofar as he is choosing the thoughts which may most conveniently be spoken, we may wonder how deeply his memory and imagination are stirred by

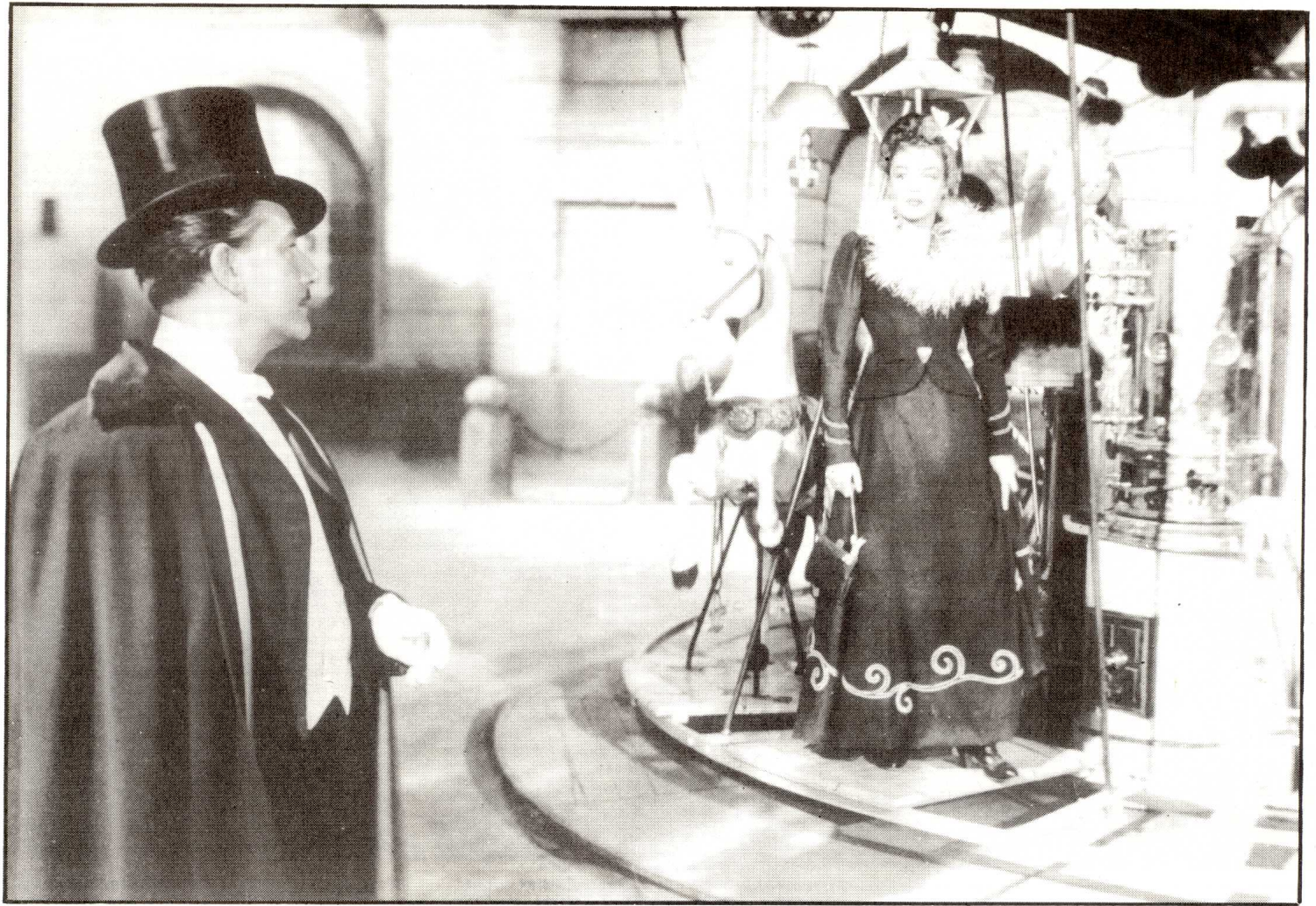
the old passions whose significance he wishes to deny. Ophuls makes it possible—not more—that the husband's declaration may be sincere and may have validity, despite the compromised position from which it is offered. Does it correspond, perhaps, to an aspiration equally felt (though equally betrayed) by husband and wife? (In the film, unlike the play, both give its claim their considered and regretful assent.) And is it altogether negated by our knowledge of the wife's infidelity? Were there not, rather, moments of truth and purity *within* the delicate pretences and calculations of that scene?

To create this openness to possibilities behind and beyond transactions portrayed in their concrete immediacy is characteristic—I tend to think, definitive—of Ophuls' approach. It gives his scenes their quality of a constant Perhaps.

Achieving this quality in *La Ronde* meant dealing somehow with the closed assertive structure of *Reigen*, undermining its insistent knowingness and thereby its entitlement to sarcasm. That is an important function of the film's major inventions, the figure of the Leader (played by Anton Walbrook) with his waltz-song commentary, and the image of the carousel. The Leader embodies the play's claim to see everything, and its promise to tell all. But his position is quite unstable; he is not this world's inventor and he has no coherent authority within it. We see him first (in an opening shot which I would count among the cinema's finest moments) as an actor seeking to define a role for himself and to discover the world in which that role is playable. Then, increasingly, while claiming to be its master, he becomes the servant of the narrative mechanism, obliged to work at ensuring that this show goes on. Most revealing, and daunting, is his emergence in the role of Censor. The "incarnation of your desire to know everything" becomes the embodiment of the refusal to let us know: we see the Leader excising the length of film which allegedly depicts the lovemaking between the Actress and the Count.

There is a parallel moment of truth with the carousel, similarly expressed in a deep joke. When it overheats and grinds to a halt at the point where the Young Man seems about to achieve the fulfilment of his desire for the Married Woman, the joke lies most immediately in the tactful grotesquerie of this way of representing impotence. At this level the carousel's breakdown represents the threat posed to the young man by his sexual failure. But more deeply (because more coherently) the breakdown articulates the threat posed by impotence to the mechanism of Schnitzler's narrative. If the carousel were (as has often been claimed) directly an image/metaphor/symbol of desire then it would also be an illustration and an endorsement of Schnitzler's view of sexuality; but it could not then coherently be shown except in endless motion. It could not start, stop, break down or need maintenance. But it *can* do these things—and require the Leader at the controls to wind it round—if we see it instead as an image for the circular processes of Schnitzler's drama. Its momentary breakdown then becomes emblematic of all that is excluded from this allegedly comprehensive survey of desire: not only impotence but also, notably, death, celibacy, homosexuality and fidelity. None of these could enter decisively into the drama





'La Ronde'

without destroying it. The Leader's repairing of the carousel is like his other interventions in that it protects the neat closure of Schnitzler's form against intolerable incursions from reality.

Alluding in this way to what the dramatic pattern can not contain, Ophuls invokes wider terms of reference than those with which his film can directly engage. But far from constituting a betrayal of Schnitzler, this exposure of the play's limitations is the pre-condition for displaying it in the best conceivable light. With the modesty that marks also his versions of Zweig, Maupassant and Louise de Vilmorin, Ophuls creates a profound work but claims only to have discovered it.

V. F. Perkins

Paradoxically, Ophuls's film version of Schnitzler's play is both a reasonably faithful one and yet a version whereby the original material, now inserted within a highly complex containing structure, is displaced. Schnitzler's play is nudged from centre-stage, so to speak, by the extra-narrative *meneur de jeu* (the 'leader'), played by Anton Walbrook, whose relationship to the Schnitzler material—and no longer this material itself—is what the film is about. But this relationship is a shifting and ambiguous one, further complicated by the concomitant shifts in our relationship—as filmic spectators—to both the narrative characters and the extra-narrative *meneur de jeu* himself.

The Walbrook character is, of course, Ophuls's one major addition to Schnitzler's cast of characters. His ambiguity, as has been suggested, lies in the changing nature of his relationship to the narrative, which relationship may be variously described as epistemological, aesthetic, and ethical. Consider his opening speech, in which he describes himself as 'the incarnation of your desire to know everything. People only ever know a part of reality. And why? Because they only see a single aspect of things. Me, I see them all, because I "see" in the round, and that lets me be everywhere at the same time, everywhere'. By identifying himself with us, the spectators, who are excluded, the *meneur de jeu* reduces himself to our disembodied desire to know, a desire explicitly couched in visual terms and relate to the mastery of space.

But the *meneur de jeu* is not merely an uninvolved spectator, as are we, but enacts aesthetic and ethical roles within the film as well, as creator of and agent within the Schnitzler material embedded in Ophuls's film. Anton Walbrook (the actor) plays a mid-twentieth-century character who assumes turn-of-the-century evening dress to direct—as well as observe—Schnitzler's characters in a film-within-the-film in which he adopts further disguises as soldier, porter, coachman, maître d'hôtel and so on. He is privileged to address us as the other characters are not, for he perceives them and himself not only as they do—not only as 'real' people in the 'real' world—but as *dramatis personae* whose world is a created one. His relationship to their narrative world is thus multifaceted: he observes them and displays them to us, his fellow spectators; he is an actor in disguise, invading the narrative space they inhabit to interact with them on their own terms; he is an extra-narrative manipulator of the drama as drama, outside its confines, though nonetheless firmly located within the larger narrative world of the Ophuls film overall.

It is, of course, the 'sexual problems' of Schnitzler's characters which engross our voyeuristic interest and that of the *meneur de jeu*, and our 'desire to know' is in some sense analogous to the patterns of sexual desire and pursuit of the characters within the narrative itself. But this desire of ours, though analogous to that of Schnitzler's characters for each other, is less explicitly sexual in two respects: (1) on the one hand, its aim falls short of copulation—unlike the desires of the characters themselves—the looking itself being the aim of our desire; (2) on the other hand, its object is not a person but a process, and a representational one at that—that is, what we desire to look at is not a person we desire, but a filmic depiction of the process of desiring itself. The *meneur de jeu* and we spectators are thus at two removes from the directly sexual concerns of the narrative. His voyeurism and ours is above all theatrical, aestheticized.

Despite the apparent delight with which he dons costumes and enacts self-consciously assumed roles within the narrative, the *meneur de jeu* preserves a consistent—and ironic—detachment from its concerns. Detaching himself from the sexual arena, he transforms his sexual needs

into epistemological and aesthetic needs. Thus, what we have been calling his ethical role within the film is relatively insignificant. But what we have been calling his epistemological and aesthetic roles, on the other hand, rather startlingly merge into one. We have seen that his epistemological desires are explicitly visual and related to the mastery of space (e.g. his opening speech) and that their aim is the inherently theatrical/filmic one of looking at the representation of an unfolding process. But the *meneur de jeu*'s epistemological role merges into his aesthetic role not merely insofar as he becomes a passive aesthetic consumer. The process of looking becomes an aesthetically creative—and not merely receptive—act insofar as the film-within-the-film is identifiable with what the Walbrook character chooses to see. In other words, the distinction between the *meneur de jeu* as mere observer and as actual creator of the film-within-the-film is no longer tenable insofar as his gaze and that of the camera coincide.

In summary, then, *La Ronde* is a film by Ophuls about the representation by the Walbrook character of the process of desiring of the Schnitzler characters. The Walbrook character calls them into being through his representation of this unfolding process of desire. And Ophuls calls the Walbrook character into being through his (Ophuls's) representation of this representational process in turn. Whereas the Walbrook character's film-within-a-film is a representation of desire, the Ophuls film overall is a representation of the representation of desire. As the film ends, the movement of the carousel (symbolic of the characters' desires) and of the camera (the filmic representation of those desires) are equally at a standstill, the count and the *meneur de jeu* absent from the final static image of the film.

Deborah Thomas

Note:

A longer version of Deborah Thomas's article on *La Ronde* may be read in the forthcoming issue of *Movie*, which will be available very shortly. We would like to thank the editors of *Movie* for permission to print the above piece.



FITZCARRALDO

(September 30; October 1-5)

Director: Werner Herzog.

West Germany, 1981.

Script: Werner Herzog.

Photography: Thomas Mauch.

Music: Popul Vuh; plus original recordings of Enrico Caruso (RCA Victor Records 1901-1906) and "Tod und Verklärung" by Richard Strauss.

Excerpts from the operas "Ernani" by Giuseppe Verdi and "I Puritani" by Vincenzo Bellini.

Leading Player: Klaus Kinski (*Brian Sweeney Fitzgerald, alias Fitzcarraldo*), Claudia Cardinale (*Molly*), Jose Lewgoy (*Don Aquilino*), Miguel Angel Fuentes (*Cholo, the Mechanic*), Paul Hittscher (*Captain Orinoco Paul*), Huerequeque Enrique Bohorquez (*Huerequeque, the Cook*), Grande Othelo (*Station Master*).

Colour. English subtitles. Certificate A. 157 minutes.

One of the most pleasant surprises of this year's Cannes Film Festival was the discovery that Werner Herzog had achieved what seemed from advance reports to be the impossible by completing *Fitzcarraldo*, his most ambitious and disaster-prone project to date. The film won Herzog the Best Director award, and the festival jury made the point of praising the film-maker for his tenacity of spirit and sense of dedication to his art. Needless to say, however, not everyone agreed that this particular award was the most appropriate one, but few denied Herzog's claim to some kind of recognition for making what for me was one of the most memorable films of the festival.

From the very start, of course, *Fitzcarraldo* seemed an ideal Herzog project. Its setting is South America at the turn of the century, and its central character is one Brian Sweeney Fitzgerald (alias Fitzcarraldo), who has a huge steamboat hauled over a mountain by a team of Indians as part of his obsessive plan to bring Grand Opera to the Amazonian jungle. One would be hard pressed to imagine a better vehicle for one of Herzog's depictions of man's God-defying exploits in the context of an epic struggle against nature. And with Klaus Kinski playing the title role, it seemed as though we were to be treated to a re-run of *Aguirre, Wrath of God*.

Fitzcarraldo is not exactly that, but comparisons with *Aguirre* are inevitable and to some extent useful. If Herzog seemed a little uncertain about what kind of cinema he wanted to create in fairly recent works such as *Stroszek* and *Nosferatu*, then one can hardly blame him for returning to South America and its historical context for inspiration. At the same time, though, every film represents a different kind of challenge for Herzog, and his imagination in this instance was fired not by the true story of a rubber-baron suggested to him by a producer friend ("It was a quite banal story of colonial exploitation... very thin stuff for a film"), but by the notion of a large boat being taken across a mountain. Herzog has made this physical process of moving the boat the centrepiece of his film, going to more extraordinary lengths than are usual even for him by doing nothing less than mounting such an operation for real.

Thus, to begin with, *Fitzcarraldo* works on the very basic principle that "seeing is believing", and sure enough one watches aghast at the sight of the large steamship being dragged along dry land by no more sophisticated means than were available at the time of the film's setting. Not since the heyday of Buster Keaton, perhaps, has a film-maker placed such faith in the power of physical actions to speak for themselves on the screen.

A quality of innocence pervades the entire film, and this is one thing that separates *Fitzcarraldo* from *Aguirre, Wrath of God*. Unlike *Aguirre*, Fitzcarraldo is no maniacal seeker of power. He dreams only of bringing opera to the jungle, and everything he does is directed towards realising this dream. His other projects (making ice and building a railway) are failures and have earned him the title "conquistador of the useless". He enjoys an uncomplicated relationship with Molly, who runs the local brothel. "The children are my real audience," he tells Molly, and indeed he prefers to live in the company of children and animals rather than at the brothel. When he is locked up for ringing the church bell in an attempt to draw attention to his cause, he is soon released because a group of children have been standing vigil outside his prison cell.

The possibility of becoming a rubber-baron provides Fitzcarraldo with his best chance of realising his dream. All the accessible areas have already been exploited, so he concocts a plan to explore a remote area of the jungle. Molly helps him to buy a boat, and he sets off with a small crew. His plan is to transfer the boat from one river to another at a point where they almost meet.

As in *Aguirre*, much of the film's running time is taken up with a long journey up river into unknown territory, and once again Herzog suggests the strangeness of this experience in some haunting imagery (the bizarre sight of an umbrella floating down stream from a point beyond where civilization has reached; the first glimpse of the Indians as they gradually become visible in a shot of the shoreline).

Fitzcarraldo doesn't explain his plan in full to the crew, who gradually desert him because of their growing fear of the Indians. Far from being hostile, however, the Indians provide the key to Fitzcarraldo's success in achieving his mission of transporting the boat over land. As it happens, they have their own reasons for lending a hand. Fitzcarraldo hears of their belief that a white god will one day appear and show them "a world without sorrow". He intends to use this myth, he says, adding that "Caruso will be the voice of that god." But it is the boat that has impressed the Indians, who inadvertently undo Fitzcarraldo's larger project when they send the steamer down through the treacherous rapids of the second river in an act intended to appease the gods.

Herzog's film is about the meeting of two dreams. "It's only the dreamers who move mountains," says Fitzcarraldo, and it is the combined force of his and the Indians' dreams that accomplishes the extraordinary task of moving the boat over a mountain. The meeting of the two spirits is beautifully suggested when Fitzcarraldo plays his record of Caruso singing in response to the drembeats of the Indians who are watching the progress of the boat. As one would expect, Herzog makes much of the strange nature of the ensuing contact between two different cultures. There is a marvellous shot, for instance, of the Indians tentatively exploring the side of the boat with their fingers before scrambling up to greet their alien visitors. They proceed to explore Fitzcarraldo himself in a similar manner, responding to his handshake by gently stroking his fingers and hair. And there is a classic Herzog moment when the nervous crew try to eat their evening meal while being surrounded by a mass of onlooking Indians, who seem fascinated by this strange ritual.

Fitzcarraldo is a magical film. Showing no signs of the troubles that bedevilled the shooting, its generosity of spirit is wonderfully encapsulated in the joyous last sequence, which turns failure into success.

Peter Walsh

BOOK REVIEWS

TELEVISION IN THE WEST AND ITS DOCTRINES by N.S. Biryukov. Progress Publishers, Moscow/£2.95.

One serious problem besets any researcher wishing to write about television. The pace of change in the field is such that the publication almost inevitably turns into archive material (to varying degrees) once it is on the bookstand.

The central thesis of this book—that the mass media in capitalist society are an instrument of the ruling class and its ideology—does not suffer from this problem. However, on several factual matters it does—for example, the changes in French TV since the socialist victory, the advent of Channel 4 in the U.K. and the erosion of power of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in the U.S.A. The substantive argument remains to be discussed.

The opening chapters detail the rise of TV to a position of dominance in relation to other media. Such an accommodation was achieved through an interlinking of financial interests, directorships, etc., which in turn led to the formation of monopolistic blocks controlling the channels of communication. The latter half of the text is devoted to debunking the various means of legitimisation employed by politicians and those in television to imply its independence—for example, the notion of 'impartiality' and, at an international level, the 'free flow of information'.

There are a number of difficulties with the analysis. The first is the scope of the project, which is to summarise TV in capitalist society in 200 pages. While the author does qualify the analysis by admitting to the 'rich diversity' of legal, economic and organisational forms, the stress on factors uniting them overburdens the argument. One may end up with an accurate reading of the situation but it is of little use without an understanding of the subtleties and nuances involved. No mention is made of the experiment at ZDF in West Germany to radically alter the content and form of programmes made there; nor is reference made to the structure of TV in Holland, where the plurality of religious and political organisations is recognised in the allocation of airtime.

It was in these columns a few months ago that I reviewed Stuart Hood's *On Television*, a book which shared many of the conclusions of Biryukov, but which differed from his work in its ability to avoid at least some of the cruder elisions which rigidly tie in economic ownership and ideology.

The book does grant us the opportunity of reading a work produced in the Soviet Union without any journalist-intermediary to paraphrase the entirety as 'propaganda'. However, readers also have to allow for indulgences like the following: "The crisis of the bourgeois cinema is . . . attributable to more profound reasons than the impact of television: the weakening and vulnerability of bourgeois ideology, its inability to genuinely win the hearts and souls of the rising generation in the face of the more impressive successes scored by world socialism" (p.25). (Needless to say, this is one point where the argument is not supported by statistics.) Another example is his description of the B.B.C. as 'a purely ideological institution' (p. 53).

One final concern, which should be the eventual aim of such texts as this, is to discover what the alternatives are. Unfortunately, Biryukov's analysis merely begs the question: simply relying on the appropriation of the media technology does not guarantee the alternative he requests.

Other questions also need to be asked: for instance, about the role of workers within the industry, about formal innovation and about the relationship with the audience. These questions are also constituents of a genuinely democratic alternative, for without them there can quite easily be substituted a left Reithianism.

Rob Burkitt

THE NEW ITALIAN CINEMA: STUDIES IN DANCE AND DESPAIR by R. T. Witcombe. Secker & Warburg/£6.95.

This is the first general study in English of the Italian cinema since the translation of Leprohon's *Italian Cinema* (1972—but first published in France in 1966) and Roy Armes' *Patterns of Realism* (1971), and for this reason alone it is to be welcomed. The book aims to discuss the past two decades of the Italian cinema, roughly from the point at which Leprohon left off. But where Leprohon's was a comprehensive history from the beginnings, Witcombe has chosen to consider mainly those directors whose reputations are international and whose films are known outside Italy; fourteen in all (plus a further half-dozen 'unknowns' discussed in the final chapter) and to study their work in some detail. He believes that 'it is possible to make a case for a brief but heady renaissance of Italian cinema in the mid-1970s'; but on the evidence of his own book as well as the comparatively few films that receive distribution here, there has been no renaissance simply because there has been no decline. Since the heady days of Neo-Realism the Italian cinema has made a consistent and distinctive (if not always critically fashionable) contribution to the film.

Witcombe specifically disclaims allegiance to any school of criticism and his style (though occasionally marred by some infelicities of expression) is happily free from the turgid, involved and ultimately meaningless writing associated with some contemporary critics. Careless proof-reading has resulted in too many misprints and the copious references (from English, Italian, French and American sources) are insufficiently detailed. This said, however, the book is full of interest, not only to *amatori* of Italian cinema in particular but to all film-goers. Critics have a passion for grouping artists, in whatever field, into Schools or Movements. Witcombe has chosen 'to pair film-makers whose artistic affinities, while not necessarily immediately obvious, are nevertheless substantial when their respective themes, styles and attitudes are examined more closely'. While in some cases this pairing is effective in revealing some similarities between two such apparently disparate directors as, for example, Bolognini and Bertolucci, Pasolini and Fellini, too often the comparison appears forced and manufactured. What we have, in fact, is a series of critical discussions of the work of fourteen important Italian directors during the past 20 years or so, not considered in isolation but with an appreciation of any stylistic and thematic links existing between them and at different stages of their development. He brings a fresh viewpoint to bear on established figures and is informative and illuminating not only on these but on several directors who are virtually unknown in this country. The book is well researched for not only does he seem to have covered the literature but he has also talked with key figures in Rome. One thing is obvious—in this country we see far too few of the important

Italian films. Witcombe has shown that Italy still produces films which can compare with those from any other country—we should see more of them!

Leo Davies

THE HOLLYWOOD SOCIAL PROBLEM FILM by Peter Roffman and Jim Purdy. Indiana University Press/£7.77.

It is remarkable that, despite the production of articles/monographs on specialised aspects of the Hollywood 'Social Problem' film, no historian has stood back and attempted to give a view of the genre as a whole. Peter Roffman and Jim Purdy make reparation with this fascinating if somewhat impersonal document, covering the years 1930-1952: from the Depression ('Hollywood and the Worker', 'The Ex-Con and Society'), through to the McCarthy era ('The Individual and Society', 'The Minorities', etc.).

By careful redefinition of the constituent elements of the genre—films within a contemporary context, a propensity for didacticism—the necessity of including the historical Message Film (progenitor of the 'Social Problem' movie) for analysis is obviated. The exclusion does not detract from the value of the book as a comprehensive and eminently readable survey, both for the general reader and for the film student, and it is difficult to see how it could be superseded, or even bettered.

The authors combine a judiciously balanced description of the political-social consciousness within America and Hollywood during these three decades, with a thorough and perceptive analysis of the films germane to the 'Social Problem' genre. Glib generalisations and resounding abstractions are fortunately avoided; the commentary is astute and lucidly written, with clarity and verve; it is a meticulous, accurate and painstaking analysis.

Roffman and Purdy have, it would appear, included discussions of virtually every liberal-minded 'message' movie that Hollywood produced (250 of which are listed in a detailed filmography). However, the authors deem only a dozen or so worthy of extensive consideration, including *You Only Live Once*, *I am a Fugitive From a Chain Gang*, *Dead End* and *The Grapes of Wrath*. By treating these films within the cycles and patterns of the genre, rather than chronologically, a greater explanatory continuity is achieved.

The authors refrain from conjecture and are duly tentative in their exploration and assessment of the extent to which the 'Social Problem' movie affected social attitudes; however, they are careful to highlight the main flaw of the films: the compromised nature of their politics. For the raw social concerns were invariably 'translated' through the Hollywood 'formula' (preoccupied with entertainment values), effectively redefining the politics in order to conform to conservative convention. The net result was a nullification of the social-political impact, and a deaccentuation which rendered the politics subservient to the dramatic conflict. The authors sum up the way in which the films are forced to work: 'arousing indignation over some facet of contemporary life, carefully qualifying any criticism so that it can be reduced to simple causes, to a villain whose removal rectifies the situation'. Thus the Hollywood 'Social Problem' film, beginning as American 'Agit-Prop' cinema, ultimately ends up assuaging radical 'political disaffection' and re-establishes reactionary Establishment values.

Jerzy S. Sliwa

Shekel and Shark

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GREAT GASPING GANDERFLAPS, SHARK! WE ARE DISCOVERED! TAKE DOWN THIS REPLY....

IT IS DONE, MASTER SHEKEL! AND LOOK! HERE'S A REPLY! IT SAYS: "UP WHAT? STOPQ"